"THE MARK OF CAIN," BY CONSTANCE B. WILLARD, BEGINS NEXT WEEK.

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BORN IN MYSTERY;

Or, The Heiress of Claremont Hall.

BY LIBBIE SPRAGUE PHILLIPS.

PART I.

On a low couch by a window lay the still, white figure of a woman, a woman who was yet young and who had once been strikingly beautiful; but all that now remained of her girlish loveliness was fast fading in death. Her long auburn hair lay in a rippling mass on the pillow, and as Agnes Claremont brushed a lock from the sick brow, the eyes of the motionless figure unclosed and gazed up into the grave, tender face which bent above her.

"You came!" she gasped. "Ah, Agnes, my life's best friend, I knew you would not fail me. Every one else has scorned and shunned me, but I knew that you would still have faith in me although appearances are all against me. Come nearer, Agnes, there is much that I would tell you, and I am growing, oh, so weak!"

Then as Agnes wound her arms around the suffering girl, she continued:

"My baby! What is to become of my baby? No one wants it here—that is why I sent for you. I must tell you my secret; knowing all, you will love and care for my child. But no one else must hear," and she glanced cautiously around the room.

"We are alone, Marian," said Agnes, gently. "What is it you would say?"

"Dear, dear friend!" and she laid one little trembling hand on the head that was bending so near her own. "What I am about to reveal will cause you bitter grief, but for baby's sake I must tell you. Could I but live and care for it myself, nothing could induce me to reveal the secret of its birth. For its father's dear sake, I have suffered in silence, but now for baby's sake I must tell my sad story to you. He would wish me to do so, I know, because, if I must die, he would wish you, and only you, to care for our baby. I was married just one years ago. My marriage has been kept a secret, because——"

Here the dying woman was seized with a fit of coughing, and as she fell back upon the pillows, Agnes feared that she would never speak again. And with her brain racked with many conflicting thoughts, she gazed at the fast paling face of her dying friend, feeling for her nothing but tenderest love and pity.

All her life she had known her; she had been the playmate of her childhood, the companion of her girlhood, and at one time she had been her brother's promised wife. For three long years that brother had been sleeping in the village church yard and Marian Blake had, since his death, learned to love another, but, whom?

That was the secret the poor girl was trying to reveal, and Agnes prayed that, for the baby's sake, her life might be spared until she had told her all.

Anxiously she bent above her, and in a moment she recovered sufficiently to moan between great gasps of pain:

"Care for my baby—promise, quick—I am dying now, its father was your own——"

Here her breath began to fail her again and Agnes bent low to catch the words that were spoken in whispers now; but she could understand but a few of the faintly whispered words, and they were:

"Promise—my baby——"

"But its name, Marian, for God's sake, tell me that! This baby must have a name—it's father's name. What is it?"

The purple lips moved again. "Promise!" she gasped, and Agnes began to realize that if her promise was to do the poor girl any good it must be made at once.

"I promise," she answered, for her great, tender heart was deeply moved. "Yes, Marian, I will care for your child for the sake of the old days when I cherished the sweet thought that you would be my sister. Poor Dick! poor unfortunate brother! He loved you very dearly, and his last words to me were: 'Be kind to Marian for my sake.' The only kindness I can do you now is to care for your baby and I will, Marian, my sister Marian, I will love and care for it, always!"

The face of the dying girl lighted up with a heavenly smile. She tried to speak again and after a mighty effort she was able to gasp, "His ba——" The words died away on her lips, and as she pointed to the sleeping infant which lay beside her, she drew another quivering breath, and then—Marian Blake was dead. Dead, and her secret would be buried with her. The innocent babe would, after all, be nameless, for not until long years after did Agnes Claremont learn the secret the dying girl had tried to reveal.

That last trembling word, "His ba——" puzzled Agnes greatly. His baby, she had meant—but whose?

That unanswered question caused her eyes to fill with tears as she lifted the little atom of humanity from the dead mother's arms and realized what a name would have meant to the innocent child; and that unanswered question was to trouble her through many years to come and cause her keenest sorrow.

One year before, Marian Blake had left her home to learn the art of dressmaking in a distant city. She had, during the year, written often to her parents, but had never in her letters mentioned her marriage, and not until a week ago when she had suddenly come home ill unto death, did they dream of her being a wife.

The neighbors shook their heads when she refused to make known her husband's name.

"The same old story," they said. "If she were really married, why should her husband's name be a secret?" And as these words fell on the ears of the wretched girl, she turned her face to the wall and refused to say another word concerning her life during the year of her absence. "Was her husband dead? Why, if he was living, had she left him?" These and numerous other questions they asked her, but a mournful shake of her head had been their only answer.

But as she came to realize that she must die and leave her child alone in a merciless world, she had tried to reveal the secret of its birth to her one true friend, but death had claimed her too soon.

Agnes, with her own hand, closed the sightless eyes, and then bore the tiny infant, which was but a few hours old, into the adjoining room where Farmer Blake and his wife, the parents of the dead girl, were sitting lone in their grief.

"It was very kind of you, Miss Agnes, to come to us in our trouble," said the poor old mother, as she took the baby from Agnes' arms. "I do not know what is to become of this child. Crippled as I am with rheumatism I cannot possibly care for it, and father says that we cannot afford to hire a nurse. Poor little friendless waif, so soon to be motherless, also."

"It is already motherless," said Agnes, gently, 'poor Marian is dead."

A low moan broke from the lips of Mrs. Blake, and handing the baby back to Agnes, she dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands; while the old farmer, with a heart-broken sob, pulled his hat over his eyes and left the room.

Agnes, beautiful, high-born, kind-hearted Agnes Claremont, stood for a moment with that little nameless baby in her arms and gazed in silence at the bowed form of the poor old woman whose heart was being crushed by a weight of grief and shame. Then, after arranging some pillows on a cot, she placed the baby upon them and knelt down by the side of the quivering form. And as Mrs. Blake felt the touch of the friend which was laid upon her shoulder, a torrent of sobs broke from her aching heart.

"Oh, Miss Agnes," she wailed, "how can I bear it! My child, my only child, dead—dead in shame and dishonor—and her baby—oh, my God!"

"But, listen, Mrs. Blake," said Agnes, as she crept closer to the woman's side. "I myself do not believe any wrong of Marian, and you must not. She was truly a wife; she told me so, and she would have told me the name of her husband had her life been spared but a moment longer. The world may refuse to believe it, may doubt her innocence and truth, but we who loved her know that she would not go into the presence of her God with a lie upon her lips. Cheer up, Mrs. Blake. This child which poor Marian has left in our care may, for a time, be regarded by the world as nameless, but I believe that the truth of its mother's marriage will some day be made known, and until then it shall bear my name and I will take care of it in my own home. I promised Marian that I would."

Then, crossing the room to where the baby lay, she again took it into her arms, while the tears fell from her eyes and dropped on the little face of the innocent child, who was, with those burning tears, christened Marian Agnes Claremont. And as this name was uttered by the lips of the noble girl, Mrs. Blake raised her pale, suffering face, on which already the light of hope began to shine.

Then Agnes Claremont, unaided, made the body of her dead friend ready for the grave. And as she was robing the silent form for its long, last sleep, wave after wave of thought rushed over her heart and mind causing her to feel stunned and dizzy.

Who had wronged her by persuading her into a secret marriage? For Agnes never doubted that there had been a marriage. And would the father ever come to claim his child?

Then to her mind would come that sentence which the dying girl had been unable to finish when trying to speak of her husband. "He was your——"

Ah! your what?

Friend she must have meant, for Agnes remembered that she said that he would wish her, of all others, to care for his child.

She had no near relatives, no intimate friends outside of the little village near which she had always lived; and yet she could not rid herself of the haunting idea that baby's father was one who was, in some way, near and dear unto herself, impossible as it seemed.

Would the mystery ever be cleared she wondered, and she could not help thinking how different life would have been for them all had it not been for that terrible misunderstanding between her father and her only brother which had caused him to be driven from home and later to take his own life; for, alas! Dick Claremont, noble and true-hearted though he had been, slept in a suicide's grave.

"Poor Dick!" she murmured, "poor, ill-fated Marian!"

And she bent and kissed the cold, white, dead face, then folded the little hands across the pulseless breast, and in them she placed a pure white lily, emblem of purity and innocence. And those who came out of curiosity to view the remains of the once beautiful Marian Blake, wondered at the lily having been placed there, on what they termed "that sinful breast." "Passion flowers," they said, "or a blood-red rose would have been more fitting."

Major Claremont, Agnes' father, was at the present time absent from home, and there being no one to interfere with her actions, Agnes spent that night and the greater part of the next day with the grief-stricken parents. The day after that, all that was mortal of the cherished daughter was laid away in the little cemetery by the river side, not far from the plot in which Dick Claremont, he who had loved her so dearly, was sleeping.

The funeral procession was a long one, all walking, as the cemetery was but a short distance from the house. Many of those who attended were led to do so by curiosity, a few by regret and affection. All knew of the engagement which at one time had existed between the dead girl and Agnes' brother, and they all knew how well Agnes, herself, had loved her; therefore, they could understand why she wept so bitterly as the coffin was being lowered into the earth; but when they came to know that she had adopted the little nameless baby, their wonder and astonishment knew no bounds.

"What would the proud old Major say?" they asked each other, he who had always looked down on the Blakes as people far beneath him socially. Indeed, some of them imagined at the time of the disagreement between him and his son that Marian Blake had been the cause of it, although no one ever knew for a certainty. But to have her illegitimate child living beneath his roof—what would he say to that? Wouldn't there be a stormy time at Claremont Hall when the stern old Major came home!

Poor Agnes! This thought also troubled her, and a few nights after the burial she sat alone in her own room at Claremont Hall in a state of nervous expectancy. Her father had come home a few hours before and she knew that the servants had, ere this, told him of her having adopted the child. But she had decided that nothing should cause her to part with it. If her father would not allow her to keep it here at the Hall, then she would take it and go away; it should not be taken from her. She must have something to love and already the helpless baby had stirred the heart of the lonely girl with something more than pity.

Her life thus far had been full of sorrow. When she was but five years old her mother had died; and as her father was by nature cold and stern, she had always stood in awe of him, and although she had always been dutiful and obedient, there were times when she felt that she did not love him as a child should love its father and it grieved her sensitive heart that this was so.

He had always been something of a tyrant; indeed, the sweet wife who had died in her youth was most thankful at being rid of the burden of living. He had tyrannized over her until he had broken her heart and finally she had subsided into a state of silent despair, in which she died.

The only being that he ever seemed to love was his son. His whole heart was set on the bright, handsome lad who was so different in disposition from himself. But the boy had angered him in some way—had committed a crime—the stern old man harshly told Agnes, and in an insane rage he had driven the boy from home. That he had committed a crime, Agnes never would believe, but she had never been able to learn just what had been the cause of the trouble, as her father would answer no questions concerning him and would not allow his name to be mentioned in his hearing; and when the poor dead body was brought home it was buried without any one being allowed to take a last look at the dear face.

He had drowned himself. His body had been found floating in the waters of the Hudson, and had been recognized by papers and letters found within the pockets of his coat. One letter was addressed to Agnes, and ran as follows:

"Dear Little Sister: If this letter ever reaches you, you will know that I have died by my own hand. God forgive me, but my life, shadowed and darkened by a father's curse, has become unbearable. I charge you again to be kind to Marian for my sake. I know you will; and if my father ever learns that I was innocent of the great crime of which he accused me, then and not till then, tell him that I forgave him before I died."

This letter had been read many times by the broken-hearted sister, and then carefully locked away. And tonight, as she sat in the deepening twilight, living over again the sad events of her life, she wondered if ever the time would come when the proud old father would learn that he had wronged his boy. Would the shadow of disgrace which seemed to hang above his early grave some time be cleared away; and the name of poor Marian, would it also be cleared some day from shame and dishonor?

Her musings were interrupted by a footman who came to say that Major Claremont awaited his daughter in the library.

Agnes rose and going to the window gazed for a moment at the starry heavens above her, breathing a prayer that God would guide her and give her strength to do the right, no matter what the sacrifice might be.

Major Claremont was a handsome man, but his face, handsome though it was, always wore a stern, repelling look, and as Agnes entered the room where he was sitting in moody silence, she felt her heart grow faint and sick within her.

It was only for a moment, however, then, summoning all her courage, she drew her slight figure to its full height, and with an expression of fearless resolve on her beautiful face, she advanced to the center of the room where he was sitting.

"I have sent for you, Agnes," he said, "to talk with you about this child, whom I understand you have adopted, and I hope you have come prepared to be reasonable. You, doubtless, acted upon a sudden impulse when you took this child, and I suppose you have, ere this, come to realize how altogether impossible it will be for you to keep it."

"Why impossible?"

Agnes asked this question in a steady voice, although her heart was beating wildly. Major Claremont moved uneasily in his chair, while an expression a little more stern than usual settled on his face.

"Impossible," he answered, "because I will not have it here! Send it away at once!"

Then as Agnes was about to speak, he added:

"I do not intend to waste my breath in a senseless argument. I mean to be obeyed. Send it away!"

"But, papa," and Agnes' voice was trembling now with suppressed emotion, "what if I refuse to obey you in this?"

The Major now looked at his daughter in astonishment too deep for words. She had never disobeyed him in her life; that she would ever do so, he had never dreamed.

"Refuse to obey me!" he exclaimed, "you would not dare!"

"But if I should," she asked, "what then?"

"In that case," he answered, excitedly, "I should take the matter in my own hands. I have always ruled this house; I shall rule it while I live. I have said that this brat shall be sent away. I have nothing more to say; you may go!"

And he waved his hand as though to dismiss her from his presence.

"But I have something more to say."

Agnes advanced a step nearer as she said this, while the look of astonishment deepened on the Major's face.

"This brat, as you call it, is Marian's child—poor Marian, the one friend of my lonely life. I loved her, and when she lay dying, I promised that I would care for her baby. I will not break my promise to that dead girl—she would have been my sister if poor——"

"Stop!" thundered the Major. "Do not mention his name! And do not flatter yourself that one of Marian's Blake's class ever would have borne the name of Claremont; I should have seen to that. And if your lonely life, as you term it, has caused you to make an intimate friend of old farmer Blake's daughter, that is no reason why you, now that she is dead, and dead in shame and disgrace, should feel it your duty to care for the offspring of the shameless creature!"

The hot tears rushed to Agnes' eyes, and angry words trembled on her lips, but the man before her was her father; and crushing for a moment the wild rebellion that filled her heart, and going close to his side, she laid her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"Papa, don't," she said, gently, "don't speak that way of Marian."

Then she broke down and wept bitterly. This angered the Major more than words could have done.

"You cannot move me with tears," he cried, as he shook off the caressing hand. "If you think to do so you may as well wipe your eyes. That base-born brat goes out of this house in the morning."

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"But, surely, papa, you do not doubt that Marian was married?"

"Married!" he exclaimed, sneeringly. "To whom, I should like to know? Ellis Deering? He followed her, I remember, when she left home!"

"What do you mean?"

Every particle of color faded from Agnes' face as her father uttered that name, and she felt that her senses were leaving her. She raised her hand to her head and stood for a moment in discreet silence. Then, with a mighty effort, she recovered herself, and as her father was still regarding her with a sneering look on his handsome face, she repeated the question:

"Answer me, sir! What do you mean?"

"I mean what I said. When Marian Blake left home, Ellis Deering followed her the very next day. She waited for him at Jersey City; from there they went together to New York. I have known this for a long time. Now, answer me this: Has Ellis Deering written to you during the year of his absence?"

"Yes, sir; often."

"Has he ever given you any sensible reason for his having absented himself for so long a period?"

"Yes, sir; he has been attending to business affairs for a friend."

"What friend?"

"I do not know."

"What is the matter with his friend that he is not able to attend to his business affairs himself?"

"I am sure I——" Agnes paused unable to think clearly. Her brain was reeling with the terrible suspicion which her father's words had awakened within it. He saw her evident confusion and continued:

"See here, Agnes, the facts of the case are these: Marian Blake and Ellis Deering went to New York together one year ago. She returned alone, died, and left this child, and he has not returned at all. Now, you wish to care for it and harbor it here. For whose sake are you doing this? For the mother's sake, she, who was your boasted friend, or for the father's sake, he who was your lover, and the man whom you have promised to marry?"

His sneering tone so filled her heart with indignation there was no room for any other feeling. The momentary doubt of Ellis Deering's honor was, for the time completely crushed; and with flashing eyes and her voice ringing with the anger she could no longer control, she said:

"Do you think to destroy my faith in Ellis simply because he happened to go to New York the next day after Marian went away? You are saying all this to torture me. Is it not enough that my childhood was shadowed and darkened by your cruelty that you must now seek to cast a gloom over the future! Papa, have you no heart?"

"Never mind about my heart; I have a brain, and it is filled with good solid sense, and I shall not allow you to make a fool of yourself. You are talking in a very disrespectful way to your father. What do you mean by my cruelty darkening the years of your childhood?"

"Did it not? Was it not your cruel tyrannical ways that broke my mother's heart and sent her to an early grave? Child though I was, I remember the many heartburning tears she shed. Was it not your insane temper and unbending will that sent my brother from home and into a suicide's grave? Dick was——"

"Stop!" And he sprang to her side and caught her roughly by the shoulder.

"Stop! I repeat; do not dare to utter that name again!"

"But I dare!" And she drew herself from his grasp and faced him with fearless determination written on every feature. "You and you alone, are responsible for poor Dick's death; and when you stand before your Judge on the last great day and He asks you for the son whom He gave unto your keeping what will you answer then? Tell me this. What account will you render unto your God for the precious soul He entrusted to your care?"

This thought made the conscious-stricken man tremble. A life of selfish indulgence had not quite obliterated the remembrance of the teachings of a pious mother. Major Claremont, tyrant though he was, believed in the existence of a God. He would have given worlds at this moment to believe there was no God, no judgment, no eternal life, no anything but oblivion after death. For, as the burning words fell from the lips of his daughter, he felt himself as much a murderer as though his hand had really shed blood.

But though he was actually trembling with a sense of guilt, there was no softening of the stern voice as he drew nearer the excited girl and answered:

"Then you dare defy me! You, my daughter, dare to disobey and defy me to my face! Leave the room this minute before I, in my indignation, swear, as I swore to my worthless son, that I will never look upon your face again! Go! and remember that the base-born brat which you are harboring leaves this house in the morning!"

"Very well," she answered, in calm, clear tones, for his cutting words had made her reckless with despair, "but before I go, I may as well tell you something, also, to dream over and to cheer you through the lonely night hours. If that child is sent away in the morning, I shall go with it, then you will never have the chance of looking on my face again!"

And with these words she swept from the room.

She felt that she would have stifled had she stayed there a moment longer, such a rush of bitter emotions surged in her heart.

She went back to her room, sat down by the window and looked out into the night. Far across the broad meadow lands which surrounded Claremont Hall she could see lights burning in the windows of the old stone mansion which was owned by old Doctor Deering, Ellis Deering's uncle. He was a bachelor, and when Ellis, at an early age, had been left an orphan, he had taken the lonely child to his own room and had given him the tenderest care. He loved the boy dearly, and it was generally believed that when he came to die, he would make him heir to his immense fortune.

Claremont Hall was the neighboring estate, and what more natural than that Major Claremont's children, Dick and Agnes, and Ellis Deering should grow up together as playmates and intimate friends. Their friendship for each other seemed to grow and strengthen with the years, and finally between Ellis and Agnes it ripened into love, and no one was more pleased than Dick Claremont when, one day, their engagement was made known, and he grasped the hand of his lifelong friend, rejoicing in the thought that one day he would call him brother.

The two young men were inseparable after this, and when the trouble arose that sent Dick Claremont from his home, Ellis' heart was filled with sorrow almost as keen as that which filled the heart of poor Agnes.

Ellis had been her only comfort since then and she had always placed the greatest confidence in his truth and honor. That he could or would deceive her in any way, she had never dreamed.

But her father's sneering words had planted within her heart a bitter thought, and as she sat there looking out into the starry night, that thought grew and shaped itself into a doubt of her lover's loyalty to her.

She went carefully over the past and in doing so she recalled many things that seemed to strengthen the cruel doubt. Would it grow into a certainty? Merciful heaven! would it?

She could remember many times when he had seemed troubled and ill at ease, when her anxious inquiries as to the cause had seemed to annoy him. His evasive answers returned to her like an echo, thoughts and facts surged in her memory like mocking demons.

And yet it was Marian's last words more than anything else, on which the cruel doubt was feeding. "What I am about to reveal will cause you bitter grief. He would wish you, and only you, to care for his child—he was your——"

Ah! that unfinished sentence! Had she meant your lover?

Agnes brushed the hair from her brow which was growing hot and feverish.

"The awful thought will kill me!" she exclaimed, and rising, she walked back and forth across the room for more than an hour with her hands locked so tightly that the nails cut into the tender flesh in a pitiful way, while she was vainly trying to reason away the awful doubt of him whom she loved dearer than life.

Then, by degrees, her mind grew calmer. "He will soon be home," she thought, and then he will explain his long absence satisfactorily; until then I will trust him as I always have done. He shall not be condemned unheard."

And with these thoughts the noble-hearted girl, retired for the night, and presently fell asleep, thus forgetting for a time that there was such a thing as shame and disgrace and broken hearts.

But with the coming of the morning light there came to her the remembrance of the scene enacted between her father and herself, and with the remembrance, came a miserable feeling of grief and dread. She grieved that such angry words had passed between father and child, and she dreaded the future because she now felt that it must be spent outside of the walls of the old ancestral home. For she was fully determined that she would keep her promise to Marian and care for her child; and if the child must be sent from Claremont Hall she would go with it.

She expected that immediately after breakfast her father would again summon her into his presence, to enforce his orders. But she would listen in silence to what he had to say. There should be no more angry retorts on her part, for her heart reproached her for the burning words she had said on the night before. True, he had goaded her on to anger by his taunts and sneers. Had he cared for her happiness as a father should, he would not have spoken in a sneering, insinuating way of the man whose wife she had promised to be. But he was her father, and God's command, "Honor thy father and thy mother," seemed to ring in her ears as she thus reasoned with herself.

She drew aside the curtain and looked out on the dewy freshness of the morning. Her father had already risen, and she could see him now, walking on the terrace with slow, weary step and with his head bent as though thinking deeply.

And indeed he was. He had passed a sleepless night. After his daughter left him he took up a novel that lay on the table and tried to read. But the words Agnes had uttered seemed to be dancing all over the pages. "When you stand before your Judge on the last great day and he asks you for the son whom He gave unto your keeping, what will you answer then?"

He laid his book aside and gazed dreamily into the red flames that leaped and danced on the hearthstone. His boy was lost, lost forevermore, and he, himself, was to blame for it.

Then, as he came to fully realize, for the first time in his life, what a lost soul meant—a soul shut out from the presence of God into everlasting darkness, despair and woe, the heart of the wretched man was filled with terror. God would hold him responsible for that boy's lost soul, he would have to render an account of the care the boy had received, the counsel and the training. What would he answer? Ah! what would he?

Long he sat there motionless and still seemingly in a trance of misery. All the horrors of the regions of woe seemed to be creeping about him. Shrieks and wailings sounded in his ears—or was it the wind howling round the old stone chimney outside? He raised his head to listen, while his eyes involuntarily sought the window. A wild cry now burst from his lips as he sprang to his feet, trembling in every limb—for there, pressed close to the window-pane, was a wan, white, death-like face—the face of his son, Dick Claremont.

What did it mean?

Over and over again he asked himself this question, as stricken with fear and troubled by a guilty conscience, he dropped into his chair and sat there as one condemned. At last, summoning all his courage, he glanced toward the window again—the face was gone.

Had he seen a ghost?

The cold perspiration gathered on his brow, as mute and still, but with his sense of hearing quickened to an almost painful acuteness, he listened for the faintest sound. But he heard nothing, not the slightest stir. A few slow, dreadful minutes passed away, then the first sharpness of his mental agony subsided; his strength came back to him, and springing to his feet, he opened the door and passed out upon the veranda, every fiber of his frame quivering with excitement.

But he could find no trace of any living soul, not the faintest sound could he hear save the sighing of the wind amid the leafless branches of the trees.

He was not a superstitious man but he was more disturbed than he cared to own even to himself.

He went back into the house, locked and bolted the dooor, and retired to rest; but sleep refused to come to his confused brain and until morning dawned he tossed restlessly about, his heart aching with a burden of dark memories, and his mind filled with a vision of the ghost-like face which he had seen at the window.

As soon as the first streak of daylight gilded the east he arose and made a careful search of the premises. But the morning light failed to reveal a trace of any one having been prowling around, nothing had been disturbed; and when Agnes from her window gazed upon his bent figure, he was still wondering over the haunting vision.

Had he really seen a ghost?

The breakfast bell sounded and father and daughter entered the breakfast room and sat down to the table alone, and the meal was partaken of in silence.

Agnes rose from the table after the meal was over and began moving aimlessly about the room. She felt nervous and ill at ease. That her father would repeat his command of the night before, she felt certain and she kept glancing at him in a nervous, apprehensive way.

Suddenly he raised his head, and as their eyes met Agnes noticed now, for the first time, the drawn, haggard expression of his face. It seemed to her that he had aged ten years since the night before, and a sudden pity filled her heart for the evidently wretched man whose harsh, selfish nature prevented him from enjoying life as he should.

"Papa," she said, as she advanced slowly to his side, "I was rude to you last night; I should not have spoken as I did. Will you forgive me?"

Slowly the bloodshot eyes were raised to her face and Agnes shrank from the searching, wondering gaze that was fixed upon her.

He did not reply. He had been the one most to blame, but he could not conquer his pride sufficiently to say so. To own himself in the wrong was something he had never done in his life. A strange, new feeling had sprung up within his heart, a feeling of self-condemnation, but he would not own it. His proud, haughty spirit was humbled but not broken, and unaccustomed as he was to speaking words of love and tenderness, he found it hard to bring himself to speak even a few gentle words of forgiveness to the poor girl who stood waiting tremblingly by his side.

"Papa," she continued, and her voice sounded full of tears, "can it be that I, too, must go out from the old home without a blessing! It would grieve me to do so, even if your curse does not follow me as it did poor——"

She stopped short. No; she would not speak that name again; she would obey him in this, in everything save when she knew he was in the wrong.

He rose to his feet now, and with a quick, nervous movement, pushed his chair aside. Agnes could see that he was greatly agitated; had she angered him again, she wondered?

This strange story of love and mystery will be continued in next week's Ledger, leading the reader to some very dramatic and remarkable situations. Every subscriber is entitled to our free cameras and patterns as advertised on pages thirteen and fifteen.

In some of the low-priced restaurants in German cities food is served on paper plates.

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Any honest person who suffers from Rheumatism is welcome to this offer. For years I searched everywhere to find a specific for Rheumatism. For nearly 20 years I worked to this end. At last, in Germany, my search was rewarded. I found a costly chemical that did not disappoint me as other Rheumatic prescriptions had disappointed physicians everywhere.

I do not mean that Dr. Shoop's Rheumatic Cure can turn bony joints into flesh again. That is impossible. But it will drive from the blood the poison that causes pain and swelling, and then that is the end of Rheumatism. I know this so well that I will furnish for a full month my Rheumatic Cure on trial. I cannot cure all cases within a month. It would be unreasonable to expect that. But most cases will yield within 30 days. This trial treatment will convince you that Dr. Shoop's Rheumatic Cure is a power against Rheumatism—a potent force against disease, that is irresistible.

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Food That Helps Baby and the Family Pleases Mother.

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Fall Fashions.

Striped Saunders—What's dis, Dreamy? Youse ain't gone inter biz, has youse?

Dreamy Dawson—Naw; but seein' folks ain't givin' away nuttin' but straw hats, I had ter make a coat out o' dese.

Concerning Ourselves.

Each ear has four bones.

The human skull contains thirty bones.

The sense of touch is dullest on the back.

The body has about five hundred muscles.

Every hair has two oil glands at its base.

The lower limbs contain thirty bones each.

The globe of the eye is moved by six muscles.

The cerebral matter is about seven-eighths water.

The normal weight of the liver is between three and four pounds.

The human skeleton, exclusive of teeth, consists of 208 bones.

Hair is very strong. A single hair will bear a weight of 1,150 grains.

The enamel of the teeth contains over 95 per cent calcareous matter.

The wrist contains eight bones, the palm five; the fingers have fourteen.

The roots of the hair penetrate the skin about one-twelfth of an inch.

The weight of the average sized man is 140 pounds; of a woman 125 pounds.

The only involuntary muscle composed of red or striped fibres is the heart.

Men have been known to lose by perspiration 5,000 to 6,000 grains an hour.

Straight hairs are nearly cylindrical; curly hairs are elliptical, or flat.

A Proper Distinction.

Little Mary's big sister was engaged to Mr. Brown, who was away on an outing trip with Mary's brother. Her father was writing to his son and prospective son-in-law and asked the little girl if she had a message to send Mr. Brown.

"What shall I say, pap?" asked she.

"Why," said the father, "I believe it is the fashion to send your love."

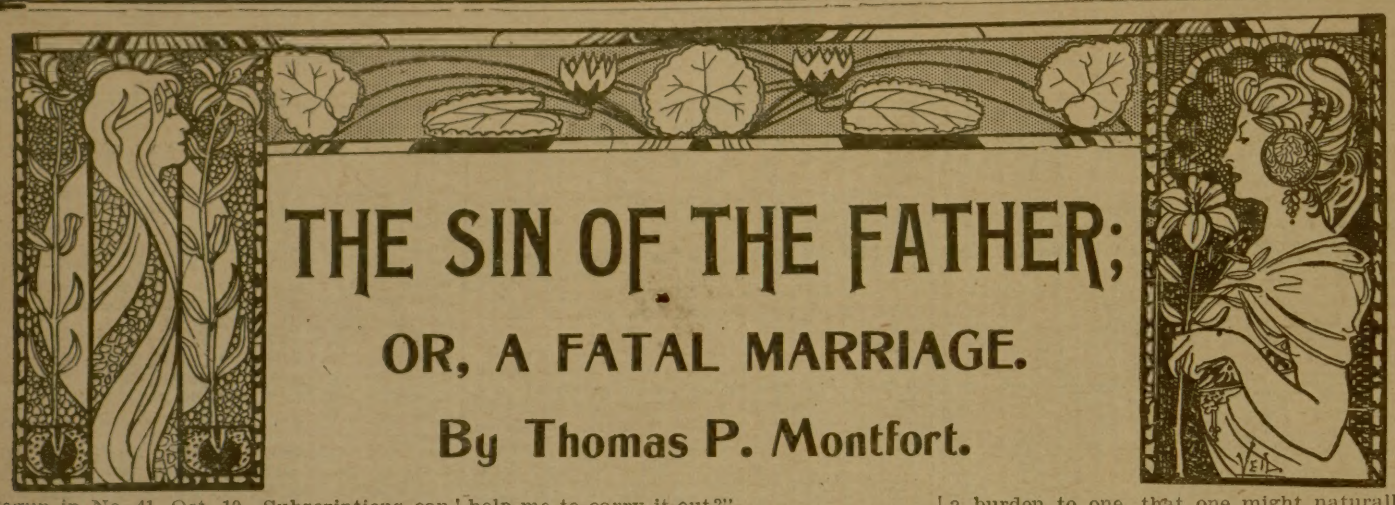
Some minutes later her father inquired: "And what shall I say to brother Tom?"

"Well," replied the little miss, with a sigh, "you may send my fashionable love to Mr. Brown and my real love to Brother Tom."

Oh, Joy!

"What's the big book you've got?"

"It's a doctor's book I found. Now I can find a whole lot of new diseases for my dolls to have."



THE SIN OF THE FATHER;

OR, A FATAL MARRIAGE.

By Thomas P. Montfort.

Begun in No. 41, Oct. 10. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be procured from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

GOING AWAY.

"Her child! Your child!" Hester repeated in stupid amazement, and with slow deliberation as if she was feeling of the words to make sure of them. "Oh, Walter, Walter, my poor boy Walter!" she cried at last. "What is it you tell me? What more calamities can fall on this once so happy family?"

"Nothing more, Hester," Walter replied. "There is only death left, and even that would not be a calamity now. It would be better for both Armina and me if we could die this night. A thousand times better for us both than to live the lives that are before us."

"Aye, Walter," Hester replied, "as dear as you both are to me I can't say that you are not right. Poor children," she continued, "your ways through life will be dark as night, and there will be no hope of a coming morning."

"No, Hester, no hope, no hope," Walter said, wearily. "All our lives we must grope in the darkness. But I do not complain of my lot, Hester, for dark and accursed as it is Armina's is so much worse. She it is that is to be pitied, for she it is that must bear the heavy burden of the sorrow, and the shame. Oh, Hester, you must be good to her. You must be more than a friend. You must be a sister, a mother. You must be everything, for she will have no one else."

"I will," she replied. "I will be everything and do everything that lies in my power to make her burdens lighter."

"Yes, I know you will," Walter said, in tones of perfect faith. "I have no fear of that. I am going away at once, and I am going to take nothing of my father's possessions with me. All his money and all his property shall go to Armina. The house here shall be hers to keep or to sell as she chooses. You must advise with her about such things, Hester, for she is inexperienced in the ways of life, and there will be no one else to advise her."

Hester nodded her consent, and after a short pause Walter went on:

"I think," he said, "that it would be best for her to go away—for a year or so at least—or until her—until everything is over. If she remains here there will be talk, and I can do nor say aught to shield her. To declare her purity I must declare our marriage, and it would kill her if t' t were made public. The better way will be for her to go away—even beyond the ocean—where no one will know her. There she will be safe from the prying eyes and vicious tongues of defamers. There she may be known as a young widow. I hate deceit, but sometimes it is better, and in this case no one will be hurt by it. And then, it is not far from the truth. She is widowed in one sense, and a sad sense at that. After a while if she wants to come back here she can come and no one save you and she need know that she is a mother. It it—the child—lives, people can easily believe it an adopted one. It will be better to practice some deceit and let people here believe what is not true than to have them know everything."

"Yes; far better," Hester agreed. "I do not like false appearances, and I never dreamed that there would come a time when a Blackmore would be ashamed for the world to see and know every act of his life. But it has come, and through no fault of the ones who must suffer. It is better, Walter, far better, that the world should not know."

"Then you approve of my plan and will help me to carry it out?"

"Yes; so far as I can see, what you propose to do is best, and I will do all I can to help you."

"Thank you. And now, Hester, when I am away I may write to you sometimes, because I shall want to know how Armina and—how she gets along. If you get any letters from me they must be sacredly confidential. No eyes but yours must see them and no one must have any knowledge of them—not even so much as a hint."

"Have no fears, Walter, that I will do aught that you would not have me do, or that I shall fail, in any particular, to obey your wishes. I will remember your requests, and it shall be as you desire. Is there anything else you would ask of me?"

"No; nothing more, except if you can reach me sometimes by mail you might drop me a line so that I may know how you are getting along—you and Armina. I don't know that you will ever know where to address me, but you may."

"If I do," Hester replied, "I shall surely write to you. And, Walter, you must let me know where you are and how you get on. You must write to me once in a while, at least. You are to me like a son, and if years passed while I knew nothing of you, and was sure that you were living, I should suffer almost as a mother would. You must let me know something of you now and then, Walter, so that I may know you still live."

"Well, Hester, I'll write occasionally if I am where I can send a letter. But I don't know where I shall be. I may soon be hundreds of miles from any mail line and as far from civilization. It is more than likely I shall be."

"Oh, Walter!" Hester cried, amazed and shocked, "surely you don't mean to do anything rash! Surely, you don't mean to go off to any wild part of the world and risk losing your life. Don't do anything like that, my dear boy. Don't go into danger unnecessarily."

"What difference need it make to me, Hester?" Walter replied, bitterly. "Why need I shun danger? Is life likely to be so sweet to me that I shall prize it and seek to preserve it? The sooner death comes, my dear old friend, the better; and instead of shunning it, I would be more inclined to go out of my way to meet it. Today as I walked down the street I saw a man very nearly run over by a wagon. A moment more and he would have been killed. It was a narrow escape, and those who saw it shook their heads and spoke and acted as though a great misfortune had been averted. Once I should have thought like them, and if I had seen a man killed I should have considered it a terrible calamity to him, and I would have pitied him. But it is not so now. I felt today that that man was unfortunate, and that if he had been killed he would have been an object of envy rather than pity. I could not help but think what a glorious thing it would be to die—to be struck down, as he would have been, and in one moment be free of this life with all its bitter trials, and blind gropings in the dark. I want danger, Hester, and the more there is in my life the better."

Hester made no reply, but she fixed her eyes on her young friend in an inquiring gaze, and sighing heavily, shook her head with a movement that denoted deep sadness. She had heard the aged, whose days of usefulness were past, wish for death, but it was so unlike the young and vigorous, to whom life should be sweet and its future all radiant with hope and the highest expectations. Walter's words and manner were so curious, and so serious, that she began to have fears for him. She was not sure to what lengths he might go, for it seemed to her not improbable that when life became a burden to one, that one might naturally seek to throw it off. Only fear causes people to cling to a burden—only cowardice prevents the weary from throwing down the life that has grown too heavy to bear; and Walter Blackmore was not a coward, and he knew no fear.

Walter must have understood something of what was in Hester's mind, for after a short time he said:

"Have no thought, Hester, that I shall be base enough to wantonly shrink from that which is before me. They say it is only the brave who take their own lives, and it may be so. But there are times when it requires greater bravery to live. I shall not wantonly place my life in jeopardy. My existence from henceforth is accursed and my way will be clouded over with a never ceasing sorrow, but so long as Heaven wills that I should live I will live it out."

There was a long pause after that, during which Walter and Hester appeared deeply thoughtful. The faithful old woman sat with her head hung down, and great tears welled up in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. She was thinking of the old happy days and contrasting them with the dark-shadowed present. There would never be a return of the old happiness—never a break in the black, black night.

It was Walter who broke the silence.

"Hester," he said, "how is Armina tonight?"

"She is no better nor no worse, so far as I can see," Hester replied. "That was a terrible shock she received, Walter, and it will be a long time before she entirely recovers from it."

"She never will recover, Hester. She will never recover entirely."

"No; but what I mean is to get her strength back. The doctor says she will get well and strong again."

"Yes, yes; I know that, Hester. The doctor has talked to me about it, and he seems to think that she is going to recover, and he wonders, I know he does, why I do not show any satisfaction from hearing his assurances. Why should I, who love her with all my being, rejoice to know that she is to live and suffer all her life such agonies as hell can not exceed? She will live and her old-time strength will come back, but her happiness and peace of mind will never come to her again. She will recover physically, but what are her physical sufferings compared to what she must always suffer mentally?"

Walter arose and began to pace the floor with his head hung and his hands crossed behind him. It was plain that he was deeply absorbed in thonght—so deeply, indeed, as to be oblivious to everything about him. Hester, sitting quietly in her corner, watched him, and she was surprised and startled by the look that came over his face. It was an expression she had never seen there before and it was so strange and awful that she could scarcely repress a shudder when she saw it. To and fro he paced for full five minutes, his features growing more and more set the while. Then he stopped suddenly in the middle of the room, and fixing his eyes on the wall straight before him, said:

"'The sin of the father shall be visited on his children even to the third and fourth generation.' The Bible says that, and I know now that it is true. I never knew it before because I had never felt it, but I know it now. It is true," he repeated, then clenching his hands and assuming an air of utter, dreadful defiance, he cried: "But it is not right. It is not just. I don't care where the law comes from, nor who originated it, it is unfair, unrighteous, unholy."

Walter! Walter!" Hester cried, starting up, alarmed not more my his words than by his manner. "Do, my poor boy, for Heavens' sake, be careful! It is God that you are speaking against."

"God!" and he turned his eyes on her so sharply that she involuntarily shrank from their burning, penetrating gaze. "God!" he repeated. "Is there any God? Can there be any God who takes notice of the things done in this world?"

"Walter, oh, my poor Walter!" Hester cried in dismay and the deepest distress. "Oh, why do you talk like that, my dear child, when you have always been brought up in a Christian way, and been taught to believe in and worship the great God. You know there is a God, Walter, and you know that whatever he does is right."

"I did beleive that, Hester, but I can't believe it now. I have tried to keep the old belief, and I have tried to pray, but I have not succeeded. If there is a God he is far away, and I can not reach him or feel him. But no matter, no matter. You can go now, Hester; but first I will tell you good-by, for I shall not see you again before I go away, and perhaps never. Remember all I have said to you regarding Armina."

"I'll remember," Hester replied, choking with sobs.

"Then good-by, my dear, faithful old friend," and Walter extended his hand while his eyes brimmed with tears. "I am going away tonight."

Hester took the outstretched hand and kissed it, her tears falling fast. She did not speak, for she could not. She turned away slowly and blindly staggered from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

A SAD JOURNEY.

Walter had never looked on Armina's face since the night of the dreadful tragedy. He had felt ever since that night, that to see her, loving her as he did and knowing the insurmountable barrier that arose between them, would be more than he could bear. Yet, to go away without seeing her once more, when in all probability they would never meet again, was a thing that he felt he would always regret. He debated the matter in his mind a long time, and he hesitated for an hour after Hester left him before he arrived at a final decision.

"I will not see her," he said, at last. "I will always think of her, and it will be better to think of her as she was than as she is."

Immediately he set about making such preparations for his going away as were necessary to complete his arrangements. He was not decided as to where he should go—he had given that matter scarce a thought beyond deciding that he would take a train and go East and North. He would go to New York, no doubt, but he would not stop there, and where he should go after that he did not know. He would trust to circumstances and be governed by whatever they opened before him.

He left his room with a small handbag containing a few articles of clothing. He was dressed in a common suit—the commonest he had—and he took with him what money he had in hand, which was a small sum, but quite enough, he reasoned, to answer his purposes until he could earn more. There were several thousand dollars of his father's money that he could have taken, but not for the world would he have touched one cent of that. He wanted nothing his father owned, and besides Armina had a better right to it and needed more.

As he passed out across the lawn he stopped and cast a glance up in the direction of Armina's room. There was a light burning and there by the open window he saw Hester sitting crouched low in an easy chair with her head resting on her hands. She was weeping, and he saw her wipe the tears from her eyes. He stood a moment gazing up at the opened window, the load on his heart growing heavier, if such a thing were possible.

Then he started to turn away, but before he removed his eyes from the stream of light a face appeared there between him and Hester. He started back in alarm at the first glance he had of that face, then, while a cry of astonishment froze on his lips, he stood transfixed.

That face was Armina's, but, oh, how changed, how sadly changed from its wont. There was a little lounge that stood beneath the window—he remembered it well—and on that Armina was lying. She had raised her head just as Walter was turning away, and he had seen a picture that would never, never pass out of his memory. Those pale, sunken, almost ghostly features would live with him all his life, and they would haunt his sleeping and his waking hours. No matter where he might go, nor how far he might roam, that face would be with him day and night. He could never forget it—never lose sight of it, but always, always it would go with him.

He turned about and walked rapidly out into the street, then hurried away as if there was something behind from which he

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would escape. He cast not one glance back, nor for a single moment did he check his speed. On straight through the city, walking the entire distance of two miles, he went. When he arrived at the station he found a train due to leave for the North within a few minutes, and he purchased a ticket for New York, glad of the opportunity to get away with so little loss of time.

It was late when he passed through the streets, and there were few people abroad. Greatly to his satisfaction, he met no one he knew and having gone so far, he hoped to get away without being recognized. Just then he was in no mood to talk, and above all he was in no humor for answering questions. He could tell no one where he was going, because he did not know. He could tell no one why he was going, because that was a sacred subject on which he could speak with no one, not even his dearest friend. He had met no person he knew and as he looked eagerly about the station he was gratified to note that all who were waiting were strangers. He began to pace restlessly up and down the platform greatly relieved to think that he was going to escape any prying questions, and that his solitude, miserable and desolate as it was, would remain unbroken. But in that grain of comfort he was doomed to disappointment.

Just as he was in the act of boarding the train a hand was placed on his shoulder and a voice close beside him arrested his attention. He knew the voice and without seeing the face he knew that he had fallen into the hands of the last person on earth he would have chosen to meet. It was Charlie Marston, his best friend and bosom companion, and whom on other occasions he had always met with a hearty welcome and a warm clasp of the hand. They had always, since they were boys, been as confidential as two brothers, and there was nothing that happened in the life of one that the other did not know. They had no secrets from each other. Even Walter's marriage, which had been kept so guardedly from the knowledge of all others, was known to Marston.

And how was Walter to so suddenly become reticent now? How could he shrink within himself, and at once shut his best friend entirely out of his confidence with no excuse or explanation? He looked about him as if he would solve the question by running away if there were but an avenue of escape. But there were no means of avoiding the disagreeable consequences of the meeting, and with a sigh and an air of hopeless resignation he entered the car and sank wearily into a seat. Marston followed and sat down by him.

For a moment no word was spoken. Walter had nothing to say at all, and Marston was busy critically examining his friend whose strangely altered appearance struck him forcibly. Walter Blackmore had aged in those last few days, and his eyes were hollow and his features haggard and sunken. He looked like a man who was completely broken mentally and physically. At first Marston had thought to rally him, to make an effort to cheer him out of what he thought to be morbidness, but when he looked into that wan, weary face and those sad, lusterless eyes, he found he hadn't the heart to do it.

So some time passed in awkward silence, then Marston, in a voice full of gentle pity, spoke.

"Walter," he said, "why have you kept away from me these past few days? You know I am a true friend and that I should have gladly rendered you any service in my power. I have called at your home time and again and asked for you, but was not admitted. You could not have doubted me, Walter?"

"No, Marston; I never doubted you," Walter replied, earnestly, though with that sadness in his tones that had settled there of late. "I never for one instant doubted your friendship, and I knew that you would gladly do anything for me that lay in your power. It was not doubt of you, Marston, that kept me from seeing you. It was something else, and I can not explain what it was. I could see no one, but I can not tell you why, and, dearest friend, Marston, I beg you to ask me no questions."

Marston made no reply, but he eyed Walter inquiringly. He was clearly puzzled and amazed. Almost a minute elapsed, then Walter, unable to contain his grief longer, clasped his hands to his head, crying:

"Oh, Marston, my dear friend, you do not know what I have suffered. You can not imagine what a weight of trouble has borne down on me and crushed me. Oh, it's terrible to bear it all and live—to have to go on bearing it—to have to go on living. If one could only die and escape it all that would be a comfort. But to go on through long years, and always with that burden on my heart! The thought of it, Marston, is awful. It is excruciating, agonizing; and death, that which people shrink from with dread fear, would be a thousand times preferable. Death! Bah! what is there in death to shrink from, or shudder at? What is there in life that any one should prize it and seek to keep it? Life is a poor bauble—a series of trials, troubles, disappointments and sufferings, and the less we have of it the better."

Charlie Marston looked at his friend in dumb astonishment. He had heard other people talk like that but they were old or they were sufferers from incurable infirmities. It was very natural for the aged, who had lived out to the end of all their hopes, to grow weary of life. No one can be expected to value the empty shells that are left in the nest after the birds are all hatched and gone.

But Walter Blackmore was young and talented and rich. His future was, to all outward appearances, as full of possibilities—grand, far-reaching possibilities—as any one's future could be. He had everything to live for, and if any one valued life he certainly should. It so seemed, at least, to Charlie Marston, and eventually he so expressed himself.

"We never know," Walter replied, "what is under the surface of other lives. It is all very easy for us to scan the outward appearances and arrive at the conclusion that this or that person has no right or cause to feel sad, discouraged or troubled. But, God! if we only knew what a mine of trouble—what an eating cancer of sorrow—was locked in that person's heart, how soon would we alter our views. Beneath a calm, smiling exterior the deadly, poisonous worm of regret may be continually eating its way into the very soul."

"But, Walter, my dear boy," Marston objected, "there can be nothing like that in your case."

"There can't,?" Walter replied almost ferociously. "Heavens! I wish I only could say that was true. But you don't know. It's as I said just now; we never know what is under the surface. We never suspect the dreadful secrets that lie concealed in the heart sapping the weary life away."

"I am sure you can have no great secret trouble concealed in your heart, Walter," Marston said. "I have known you, and know every act of your life from boyhood, and I can't understand how there can be a cause for such bitter sorrow as yours and me not know of its existence. Your father's sudden and tragic death has preyed upon your mind, and you have shut yourself up alone and brooded over that until you have become morbid. That was a great blow, Walter. It was a cruel, shocking blow. But it should not embitter your life and cause you to take the gloomy view of the future that you do. Remember Armina, one of the purest, noblest and best of women. Remember that you have her, Walter, and that she is your wife."

It was as if a dagger had stuck Walter through the heart. "She is your wife." He shrank away from his companion, his face grew livid and rigid and for a moment he was unable to breathe. Fortunately, Marston happened to be looking out of the window and did not note the effect of his words. Then, greatly to Walter's relief, some one called Marston away and Walter saw him no more; and during the remainder of his journey to New York he had all the seclusion he could have wished. He knew no one, and no one sought to intrude on him. Even the trainboy ignored him, and after addressing him once passed him by in silence. So, through the long hours he sat, fondly nursing his grief and making himself as unhappy as possible.

Arriving in New York, Walter secured passage on a ship that was sailing that day for ports in the Mediterranean. It was a matter of no consequence to him where the ship went so long as it took him away from America, and as far as possible from the scenes of his bitter disappointment and cruel suffering.

Bu it was an ill-fated ship on which he sailed, for on the fourth day at sea it burned to the water's edge. There were long reports in the newspapers of the awful catastrophe, and, while these differed in some respects, they all agreed that the entire crew and all the passengers had perished.

In those reports, among the list of names of the lost, was that of Walter Blackmore. His friends saw it, grieved for a time and then forgot about it, as friends sometimes do. But there was one who did not forget, and whose grief remained green and vigorous through the years that followed.

"Her child! Your child!" Hester repeated.

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE BLACKMORE.

Two years passed away. Armina and Hester, who had long been absent in Europe, had just returned to Mobile. Armina's child, born amid the mountains of Wales, was a fine, rosy cherub of eighteen months of age, as perfect in health and form as ever a child was.

Armina, though wearing an air of perpetual sorrow, and though pale and worn an weary, was still beautiful—more beautiful, if possible, than in her happiest days. There was one, at least, who thought her very beautiful, one pair of eyes that lingered on her form and features and never grew tired of looking, one mind that dwelt fondly on the thought of possessing her for his wife.

Armina and Hester occupied the old house almost alone. They lived in quiet seclusion, mingling with the world as little as possible. Armina made no new friends, neither did she attempt to renew those of other days. She simply asked to be left alone with her sorrow, and after a few weeks people generally understood and respected her wishes.

It was given out by Hester that Armina's child was an adopted orphan, to whom Armina had taken a strong fancy. The faithful, honest old soul had never deviated so far from the truth in her life, but to spare Armina she did it now without hesitation. She remembered that Walter had said that in some instances deceit was better than the truth, and she believed him. It certainly appeared so in this instance, for deceit would hurt no one, and the truth would kill Armina.

During their absence abroad George Blackmore had removed to Mobile from some point in the far West. He was John Blackmore's brother, and though Hester knew him and his history well, Armina had never heard his name mentioned, and never, until now, suspicioned that such a man existed.

"Why," she asked Hester, "was George Blackmore's name never spoken here?"

"The reason it was not, my child," the old woman replied, "was because John Blackmore forbade it."

"Why should he forbid it, Hester? They were brothers."

"Yes, they were brothers, but brothers are not always friends. John and George had trouble years ago, and they were never on good terms any more."

"What was it all about, Hester?" Armina questioned, persistently. "And who was in fault?"

"It was about their father's property," Hester answered, "and George was all in the wrong. You see, when he was a young man he was very wild and reckless and he lived a fast life. He spent money freely—poured it out, in fact, like it had been water—and it was his father's money, too. He not only spent money himself, but through getting into one scrape and another, compelled his father to spend large sums to get him out and save him and the family from disgrace. It kept on so until old Mr. Blackmore found half of his fortune gone, and then he refused to let George have any more money, and gave him to understand positively that he would not spend another dollar to help him out of any scrape."

"'What money and property I've left,' he said, 'belongs of right to John, and if I keep my senses he shall have it. You've gone through with all that you could ever rightly claim, and you can not have any more.'

"'If I was a whining milksop,' replied George, casting a baleful look at John, who was standing by, 'I guess it would be different. Because I don't fawn around you, father, and make pretenses of love and humanity, and all that, I am to be cast off and disowned. I can't be a hypocrite, even for the sake of your money, and if that is what you want you will have to look to the one who can.'

"John's face flushed and angry darts shot from his eyes, while his hands clenched so tight that the veins stood out on them. He was angry through and through, and if his father had not been there to restrain him, he would have done something desperate. He looked at George like he could tear him to pieces, and I believe he was angry enough then to have done it. The Blackmores, so long as I have known them, have been a hot-headed, fiery race; and there was never one of them to tamely brook an insult.

"The father saw John's anger, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said:

"'John, be quiet. Remember you two are brothers, and both of you are Blackmores. Be a gentleman, John, whatever George may be.'

"That was an unlucky speech, for it aroused George thoroughly and made him raging mad. He turned on his father and abused him shamefully, calling him a fool and accusing him of dishonesty. John could not bear to listen quietly to such talk, and breaking away from his father, stepped forward and knocked George down.

"George left the house within an hour after that, and he has never put his foot inside of it since. Before he went, though, he made dire threats against John, and swore that he would some day be revenged for his wrongs.

"'It may be years,' he said, 'but let it be long or short, the time will come when I'll have my revenge. And, remember, John Blackmore,' he continued, his face livid with hatred, 'that from this hour forth you and I are no longer brothers, but the bitterest of enemies. I shall never meet you again, never speak to you, never recognize you in any way unless it is to heap on your head the fires of my hatred which burns stronger and deeper than the fires of hell!'

"After that we heard of George occasionally, but not often, and each time we heard of him he was in a different part of the country. He took to roaming and for two or thre years he kept it up. But at last we heard that he was married, and then for five years we heard no more and we had no idea where he was. But at the end of that time there came a report that his wife was dead. We never knew whether the report was true or not, for from that day I never heard the name of George Blackmore mentioned until we came back to find him here."

There was a long silence after Hester ceased speaking, but it was broken by Armina, who said:

"I wonder what brings him here now, Hester?"

"I don't know," Hester replied, "I haven't thought much about it; but I suppose it suits him to live here at present better than it would to live anywhere else."

Armina shook her head doubtingly.

"I don't know why it is, nor how it is," she observed, "but in some way it has seemed to me from the first time I saw George Blackmore that he was here for a purpose, and that that purpose, whatever it might be, had a connection with me. It may be a fancy, Hester, but I am deeply impressed with that feeling, and I cannot get rid of it."

"Why, child, what purpose could he have in connection with you?" Hester asked.

"I don't know. I have studied over the matter a great deal, but I have not been able to arrive at any conclusion. I believe, though, Hester, that he will cause me trouble. I feel assured of it."

"He don't appear to have any ill feelings toward you, Armina, and whenever he has met you he has been exceedingly friendly and courteous."

"Yes; that's true; but behind his smile there always seems to me to be a shadow in hiding, and beneath his mildly spoken words I fancy there are thorns sharp and dangerous. I am always ill at ease when in his presence, and I keep wondering when he will throw off his mask of gentility and friendliness and stand forth in his true colors ready to wage war against me. It will come to that some time, Hester; it is sure to come to it at last. The premonition is too strong upon me to be a mere fancy."

"I hope you are mistaken, child," Hester replied, "and I can hardly think that you are not. I have had no fears of George Blackmore doing you harm, and I won't believe now that he has any evil intentions. Besides, Armina, what could he do?"

Armina only shook her head, and Hester, after a short pause, went on.

"He could have no motive to war on you except it was to secure your property, and if the worst came in that case you could declare yourself John Blackmore's daughter and legal heir. You have his own written confession to establish the truth of your identity."

"I could never do that, Hester."

"Why not? Where is the wrong or disgrace in it? There is no one now to suffer by that announcement but yourself, and I can't see that it would or could hurt you. No, my child, I have no fears of George Blackmore, and you need have none. I don't think he will be disposed to molest you in any way, and if he was he would be powerless to do you any harm."

"I wish I could think as you do," Armina said, wearily, "but I can't do it. Whenever I see that man I shudder and feel as though I want to get as far away from him as possible. It appears all the time as though he is holding something over me and is just awaiting the proper moment to let that something fall and crush me beneath its weight."

"I am sure," Hester answered, "that you will find you are mistaken. You have taken that fancy from something you have seen or heard, and you have allowed it to grow on you until you are unable to rid yourself of it. I have no fears of George, none in the world. My mind is perfectly at rest so far as he is concerned."

The way in which the old woman spoke this last sentence attracted Armina's attention and caused her to look up quickly.

"Have you fears of any one else, then?" she asked.

Hester did not answer at once, and she semed to have something in mind of which she was undecided whether it were better to speak or maintain silence. Finally, however, she decided it were better to speak out, and she hesitated no longer.

"Yes," she said, "I do have fears of some one else."

"Of whom, Hester?" Armina asked, wonderingly.

"Of Martin Blackmore," came the reply, George Blackmore's son?"

"Yes."

"I fail to comprehend your meaning, Hester. Why should he be feared?"

"Because he is dangerous, and from him,

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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Apparently it is open season in Macedonia for almost everything.

A girl never thinks a young man's heart is in the right place unless she possesses it.

Corbett apparently thinks that there is one more bunch of gate receipts in Fitzsimmons.

The conviction is growing that there is hardly enough of Mr. Miller to constitute a national issue.

Whenever anything goes wrong in St. Louis Chicago water is at once found guilty without a trial.

It sometimes happens that the woman who is disappointed in love isn't disappointed in marriage.

What a happy world this would be if people couldn't borrow trouble without putting up collateral security.

It was a Harvard professor, look you, and not a Chicago professor, who announced to an astonished world that a cooked dogfish is delicious.

Once more the finger marks of the children are beginning to be seen in the halls of the White House, and things are as they should be.

At a New York wedding a few days ago a billygoat ate the bride's veil and most of the flowers. This probably happened while the presents were being examined.

Noah Roby of Plainfield, N. J., who claims to be 132 years old, is down with the measles. This second childhood business appears to be dangerous if it is carried too far.

Those who do not believe that baldheaded men are intellectual should pause and consider how thin is the crop of hair on the headpiece of the Hon. Robert Fitzsimmons.

There are still in Bermuda thirty-six Boer prisoners who refuse to take the oath of allegiance. Some people think the climate of Bermuda is the most delightful in the world.

Scares from fear of rabies has induced a philanthropic dog fancier to volunteer the information: "When you see a vicious dog approaching place the thumb of the left hand in the palm of the same hand and the canine will pass you by." We will paste this in our hat and now seek some cabalistic formula to escape the highbinder, spellbinder and rabid political candidate.

The Blazed Trail

Or, Struggling for Gold

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE.

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CHAPTER XXX.

For a moment the three men stared at each other without speaking.

"What does it mean?" almost whispered Carpenter.

"Mean? Foul play!" snarled Thorpe. "Come on, Tim."

The two struck into the brush, threading the paths with the ease of woodsmen. It was necessary to keep the high inland ridges; the pole trail had by now become impassable. Thorpe and his foreman talked briefly.

"It's Morrison & Daly," surmised Shearer. "I left them 'count of a trick like that. I've been suspecting something—they've been layin' too low."

Thorpe answered nothing. Through the site of the old dam they found a torrent pouring from the narrowed pond, at the end of which the dilapidated wings flapping in the current attested the former structure. Davis stood staring at the current.

Thorpe strode forward and shook him violently by the shoulder.

"How did this happen?" he demanded, hoarsely.

The man turned to him in a daze. "I don't know," he answered.

"You ought to know. How was that 'shot' exploded? How did they get in here without you seeing them? Answer me!"

"I don't know," repeated the man. "I jest went over in th' bresh to kill a few pa'ridges and when I come back I found her this way.."

"Were you hired to watch the dam, or weren't you?" demanded the tense voice of Thorpe. "Answer me, you fool!"

"Yes, I was," returned the man, a shade of aggression creeping into his voice.

"Well, you've done it well. You've cost me my dam, and you've killed five men. If the crew finds out about you, you'll go over the falls, sure. You get out of here! Pike! Don't you ever let me see your face again!"

The man blanched as he thus learned of his comrades' death. Thorpe thrust his face at him, lashed by circumstances beyond his habitual self-control.

"It's men like you who make the trouble," he stormed. "Damn fools who say they didn't mean to. It isn't enough not to mean to. They should mean not to! I don't ask you to think. I just want you to do what I tell you, and you can't even do that."

He threw his shoulder into a heavy blow that reached the dam watcher's face, and followed it immediately by another. Then Shearer caught his arm, motioning the dazed and bloody victim of the attack to get out of sight. Thorpe shook his foreman off with one impatient motion, and strode away up the river, his head erect, his eyes flashing, his nostrils distended.

"I reckon you'd better mosey," Shearer dryly advised the dam watcher, and followed.

Late in the afternoon the two men reached Dam Three, or rather the spot on which Dam Three had stood. The same spectacle repeated itself here, except that Ellis, the dam watcher, was nowhere to be seen.

"The dirty whelps," cried Thorpe, "they did a good job."

He thrashed about here and there, and so came across Ellis blindfolded and tied. When released, the dam watcher was unable to give any account of his assailants.

"They came up behind me while I was cooking," he said. "One of 'em grabbed me and the other one kivered my eyes. Then I hears the 'shot' and knows there's trouble."

Thorpe listened in silence. Shearer asked a few questions. After the low-voiced conversation, Thorpe arose abruptly.

"Where you going?" asked Shearer.

But the young man did not reply. He swung, with the same long, nervous stride, into the down-river trail.

Until late that night the three men—for Ellis insisted on accompanying them—hurried through the forest. Thorpe walked tirelessly, upheld by his violent but repressed excitement. Shearer noted the fire in his eyes, and from the coolness of his greater age, counselled moderation.

"I wouldn't stir the boys up," he panted, for the pace was very swift. "They'll kill some one over there; it'll be murder on both sides."

He received no answer. About midnight they came to the camp.

Two great fires leaped among the trees, and the men were grouped between them, talking. Evening had brought its accumulation of slow anger against the perpetrators of the outrage. Even as the woodsmen joined their group, they had reached the intensity of execution. Across their purpose Thorpe threw violently his personality.

"You must not go," he commanded.

Through their anger they looked at him askance.

"I forbid it," Thorpe cried.

They shrugged their indifference and arose. This was an affair of caste brotherhood; and the blood of their mates cried out to them.

"The work," Thorpe shouted, hoarsely. "The work. We must get those logs out! We haven't time!"

Then swiftly between the white, strained face of the madman trying to convince his heart that his mind had been right, and the fanatically exalted rivermen, interposed the sanity of Radway. The old jobber faced the men calmly, almost humorously, and somehow the very bigness of the man commanded attention.

"You fellows make me sick," said he. "You haven't got the sense God gave a rooster. Don't you see you're playing right in those fellows' hands? What do you suppose they dynamited them dams for? To kill our boys? They never dreamed we was dry pickin' that jam. They sent some low-lived whelp down there to hang our drive, and by smoke it looks like they was going to succeed, thanks to you mutton-heads.

"S'pose you go over and take 'em apart; what then? Then have a scrap; probably you lick 'em. You whale daylights out of a lot of men who probably don't know any more about this here shooting of our dams than a hog does about a ruffled shirt. Meanwhile your drive hangs. Well? Well? Do you suppose the men who were back of that shooting, do you suppose Morison & Daly give a tinker's dam how many men of theirs you lick? What they want is to hang our drive. If they hang our drive, it's cheap at the price of a few black eyes."

The speaker paused and grinned goodhumoredly at the men's attentive faces. Then suddenly his own became grave.

"Do you want to know how to get even?" he asked. "Do you want to know how to make those fellows sing so small you can't hear them? Well, I'll tell you. Take out this drive! Do it in spite of them! Show them they're no good when they buck up against Thorpe's One! Our boys died doing their duty—the way a riverman ought to. Now, hump yourselves! Don't let 'em die in vain!"

The crew stirred uneasily, looking at each other for approval of the conversion each had experienced. Radway, turned easily toward the blaze.

"Better turn in, boys, and get some sleep," he said. "We've got a hard day tomorrow." He stooped to light his pipe at the fire. When he had again straightened his back after rather a prolonged interval, the group had already disintegrated. A few minutes later the cookee scattered the brands of the fire from before a sleeping camp.

Before daylight Indian Charley drifted into camp, to find Thorpe already out. With a curt nod the Indian seated himself by the fire, and producing a square plug of tobacco and a knife, began leisurely to fill his pipe. Finally Indian Charley spoke in the red man's clear-cut, imitative English, a pause between each sentence.

"I find trail three men," said he. "Both dam, three men. One man go down river. Those men have cork boot. One man have no cork boot; he boss."

The Indian suddenly threw his chin out, his head back, half-closed his eyes in a cynical squint. As by a flash Dyer, the scaler, leered insolently from behind the Indian's stolid mask.

"How do you know?" said Thorpe.

For answer the Indian threw his shoulders forward in Dyer's nervous fashion.

"He make trail big by the toe, light by the heel. He make trail big on inside."

Charley arose and walked, after Dyer's springy fashion, illustrating his point in the soft wood ashes of the immediate fireside.

Thorpe looked doubtful. "I believe you are right, Charley," said he. "But it is mighty little to go on. You can't be sure."

"I sure," replied Charley.

He puffed strongly at the heel of his smoke, then arose, and without farewell disappeared in the forest.

Then began the wonderful struggle against circumstances which has become a by-word among rivermen everywhere. A forty-day drive had to go out in ten. A freshet had to float out thirty million feet of logs. It was tremendous. Fourteen, sixteen, sometimes eighteen hours a day, the men of the driving crew worked like demons. Jams had no chance to form. Of course, under the pressure, the lower dam had gone out. Nothing was to be depended on but sheer dogged grit. Far up-river Sadler & Smith had hung their drive for the season, and so had resigned themselves to a definite but not extraordinary loss. Thorpe had at least clear river.

Wallace Carpenter could not understand how human flesh and blood endured. The men themselves had long since reached the point of practical exhaustion, but were carried through by the fire of their leader. Work was dogged until he stormed into sight; then it became frenzied. When he looked at a man from his cavernous, burning eyes, that man jumped.

Impossibilities were puffed aside like thistles. The men went at them headlong. They gave way before the rush. Thorpe always led. Not for a single instant of the day nor for many at night was he at rest. Instinctively he seemed to realize that a letdown would mean collapse.

After the camp had fallen asleep, he would often lie awake half of the few hours of their night, every muscle tense, staring at the sky. His mind saw definitely every detail of the situation as he had viewed it. In advance his imagination stooped and sweated to the work which his body was to accomplish the next morning. Thus he did everything twice. Then at last the tension would relax. He would fall into uneasy sleep. But twice that did not follow. Through the dissolving iron mist of his striving, a sharp thought cleaved like an arrow. It was that after all he did not care. Sub-consciousness, the other influence, was growing like a weed; perhaps there were greater things than to succeed, greater things than success. And then the keen, poignant memory of the dream girl stole into the young man's mind, and in agony was immediately thrust forth. He would not think of her. He had given her up. He refused to believe that he had been wrong. In the still darkness of the night he would rise and steal to the edge of the dully roaring stream. There, his eyes blinded and his throat choked with a longing more manly than tears, he would reach out and smooth the round, rough coats of the great logs.

"We'll do it!" he whispered to them—and to himself. "We'll do it! We can't be wrong."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Wallace Carpenter's search expedition had proved a failure, as Thorpe had foreseen, but at the end of the week, when the water began to recede, they came upon a mass of flesh and bones. The man was unrecognizable. The remains were wrapped in canvas and sent for interment in the cemetery at Marquette. Three of the others were never found. The last did not come to light until after the drive had quite finished.

Down at the booms the jam crew received the drive as fast as it came down. From one crib to another across the broad extent of the river's mouth, heavy booms were chained end to end effectually to close the exit to Lake Superior. Against these the logs caromed softly in the slackened current, and stopped. The cribs were very heavy with slanting, instead of square, tops, in order that the pressure might be downward instead of sidewise. In a short time the surface of the lagoon was covered by a brown carpet of logs running in strange patterns like windrows of fallen grain. The drive was all but over.

Up till now the weather had been clear but oppressively hot for this time of year. The heat had come suddenly and maintained itself well. The men had worked for the most part in undershirts. They were as much in the water as out of it, for the icy bath had become almost grateful. Hamilton, the journalist, who had attached himself definitely to the drive, distributed bunches of papers, in which the men read that the unseasonable conditions prevailed all over the country.

At length, however, it gave signs of breaking. The sky, which had been of a steel blue, harbored great piled thunder-heads. Toward evening the thunder-heads shifted and finally dissipated, to be sure, but the portent was there.

Hamilton's papers began to tell of washouts and cloudbursts in the South and West. The men wished they had some of that water here.

So finally the drive approached its end and all concerned began in anticipation to taste the weariness that awaited them. The few remaining tasks still confronting them, all at once seemed more formidable than what they had accomplished. The work for the first time became dogged, distasteful. Even Thorpe was infected. He, too, wanted more than anything else to drop on the bed in Mrs. Hathaway's boarding house. There remained but a few things to do. A mile of sacking would carry the drive beyond the influence of freshet water. After that there would be no hurry.

He looked round at the hard, fatigue-worn faces of the men about him, and he suddenly felt a great rush of affection for these comrades who had so unreservedly spent themselves for his affairs. Their features showed exhaustion, it is true, but their eyes gleamed still with the steady, half-humorous purpose of the pioneer. When they caught his glance they grinned good-humoredly.

All at once Thorpe turned and started for the bank.

"That'll do, boys," he said, quietly, to the nearest group. "She's down."

It was noon. The sackers looked up in surprise. Behind them, to their very feet, rushed the soft, smooth slope of Hemlock Rapids. Below them flowed a broad, peaceful river. The drive had passed its last obstruction. To all intents and purposes it was over.

Calmly, with matter-of-fact directness, as though they had not achieved the impossible; they shouldered their peaveys and struck into the broad wagon road. In the middle distance loomed the tall stacks of the mill with the little board town about it. Across the eye spun the thread of the railroad. Far away gleamed the broad expanses of Lake Superior.

The men paired off naturally and fell into a dragging, dogged walk. Thorpe found himself unexpectedly with Big Junko. For a time they plodded on without conversation. Then the big man ventured a remark.

"I'm glad she's over," said he. "I got a good stake comin'."

"Yes," replied Thorpe, indifferently.

"I got most six hundred dollars comin'," persisted Junko.

"Might as well be six hundred cents," commented Thorpe, "it'd make you just as drunk."

Big Junko laughed self-consciously, but without the slightest resentment.

"That's all right," said he, "but you betcher life I don't blow this stake."

"I've heard that talk before," shrugged Thorpe.

"Yes; but this is different. I'm goin' to git married on this. How's that?"

Thorpe, his attention struck at last, stared at his companion.

"Who is she?" he asked, abruptly.

"She used to wash at Camp Four."

Thorpe dimly remembered the woman now—an overweighted creature with a certain

attraction of elfishly blowing hair, with a certain pleasing, full-cheeked, full-blossomed health.

The two walked on in reestablished silence. Finally, the giant, unable to contain himself longer, broke out again.

"I do like that woman," said he, with a quaintly deliberate seriousness. "That's the finest woman in this district."

Thorpe felt the quick moisture rush to his eyes. There was something inexpressibly touching in those simple words as Big Junko uttered them.

"And when you are married," he asked, "what are you going to do? Are you going to stay on the river?"

"No; I'm goin' to clear a farm. The woman says that's the thing to do. I like the river, too. But, you bet, when Carrie says a thing, that's plenty good enough for Big Junko."

Thorpe looked at his companion fixedly. He remembered Big Junko as a wild beast when his passions were aroused, as a man whose honesty had been doubted.

"You've changed, Junko," said he.

"I know," said the big man. "I been a scalawag, all right. I quit it. I don't know much, but Carrie she's smart, and I'm goin' to do what she says. When you get stuck on a good woman like Carrie, Mr. Thorpe, you don't give much of a damn for anything else. Sure! That's right! It's the biggest thing top o' earth."

Here it was again, the opposing creed. And from such a source. Thorpe's iron will contracted again.

"A woman is no excuse for a man's neglecting his work," he snapped.

"Shorely not," agreed Junko, serenely. "I aim to finish out my time all right, Mr. Thorpe. Don't you worry none about that. I done my best for you. And," went on the riverman in the expansion of this unwonted confidence with his employer, "I'd like to rise to remark that you're the best boss I ever had, and we boys wants to stay with her till there's skating in hell."

"All right," murmured Thorpe, indifferently. Suddenly the remaining half mile to town seemed very long, indeed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Wallace Carpenter and Hamilton, the journalist, seated against the sun-warmed bench of Mrs. Hathaway's boarding house, commented on the band as it stumbled in to the wash room. Their conversation was interrupted by the approach of Thorpe and Big Junko. The former looked twenty years older after his winter. His eye was dull, his shoulders drooped, his gait was inelastic. The whole bearing of the man was that of one weary to the bone.

"I've got something here to show you, Harry," cried Wallace Carpenter, waving a newspaper. "It was a great drive, and here's something to remember it by."

"All right, Wallace, by and by," replied Thorpe, dully. "I'm dead. I'm going to turn in for a while. I need sleep more than anything else."

He passed through the little passage into the "parlor bed room," which Mrs. Hathaway always kept in readiness for members of the firm. There he fell heavily asleep almost before his body had met the bed.

In the long dining room the rivermen consumed a belated dinner. They had no comments to make. It was over.

The two on the veranda smoked. To the right, at the end of the sawdust street, the mill sang its varying and lulling keys. The odor of fresh-sawed pine perfumed the air. Not a hundred yards away the river slipped silently to the distant blue Superior, escaping between the slanting stone-filled cribs which held back the logs. Down the south and west the huge thunder-heads gathered and flashed and grumbled as they had done every afternoon for days.

"Queer thing!" commented Hamilton finally, "these cold streaks in the air. They are just as distinct as though they had partitions around them."

"Queer climate, anyway," agreed Carpenter.

Excepting always for the mill, the little settlement appeared asleep. The main booms were quite deserted. After awhile Hamilton noticed something.

"Look here, Carpenter," said he, "what's happening out there? Have some of your confounded logs sunk, or what? There don't seem to be near so many of them, somehow."

"No; it isn't that," proffered Carpenter, after a moment's scrutiny, "there are just as many logs, but they are getting separated a little so you can see the open water between them."

"Guess you're right. Say, look here, I believe that the river is rising."

"Nonsense! we haven't had any rain."

"She's rising just the same. You see that spile over there near the left-hand crib? Well, I sat on the boom this morning watching the crew, and I whittled the spile with my knife—you can see the marks from here. I cut the thing about two feet above the water. Look at it now."

"She's pretty near the water line, that's right," admitted Carpenter.

About an hour later the younger man in his turn made a discovery.

"She's been rising right along," he submitted. "Your marks are nearer the water and, do you know, I believe the logs are beginning to feel it. See, they've closed up the little openings between them, and they are beginning to crowd down to the lower end of your own booms."

"I don't know," hesitated Wallace. "I never heard of its happening."

"You'd better let some one know."

"I hate to bother Harry or any of the rivermen. I'll just step down to the mill. Mason—he's our mill foreman—he'll know."

Mason came to the edge of the high trestle and took one look.

"Jumping fish-hooks!" he cried. "Why, the river's up six inches and still a comin'! Here, you, Tom!" he called to one of the yard hands, "you tell Solly to get steam on that tug double quick and have Dave hustle together his driver crew."

"What are you going to do?" asked Wallace.

"I got to strengthen the booms," explained the mill foreman. "We'll drive some piles across between the cribs."

"Is there any danger?"

"Oh, no; the river would have to rise a good deal higher than she is now to make current enough to hurt. They've had a hard rain up above. This will go down in a few hours."

After a time the tug puffed up to the booms, escorting the pile-driver. The later towed a little raft of long, sharpened piles, which it at once began to drive in such positions as would most effectually strengthen the booms. In the meantime the thunder-heads had slyly climbed the heavens, so that a sudden deluge of rain surprised the workmen. For an hour it poured down in torrents; then settled to a steady gray beat. Immediately the aspect had changed.

Solly, the captain, looked at his mooring hawsers and then at the nearest crib.

"She's riz two inches in th' las' two hours," he announced, "and she's runnin' like a mill race." Solly was a typical north country tug captain, short and broad, with a brown, clear face, and the steadiest and calmest of steel blue eyes. "When she begins to feel th' pressure behind," he went on, "there's goin' to be trouble."

Towards dusk she began to feel that pressure. Through the rainy twilight the logs could be seen raising their ghostly arms of protest. Slowly, without tumult, the jam formed. In the van the logs crossed silently; in the rear they pressed in, were sucked under in the swift water, and came to rest at the bottom of the river. The current of the river began to protest, pressing its hydraulics through the narrowing crevices. The situation demanded attention.

A breeze began to pull off shore in the body of rain. Little by little it increased, sending the water by in gusts, ruffling the already hurrying river into greater haste, raising her far from the shore dimly perceived white-caps. Between the roaring of the wind, the dash of rain, and the rush of the stream, men had to shout to make themselves heard.

"Guess you'd better rout out the boss!" screamed Solly to Wallace Carpenter; "this damn water's comin' up an inch an hour right along. When she backs up once, she'll push this jam out sure."

Wallace ran to the boarding house and roused his partner from a heavy sleep. The latter understood the situation at a word. While dressing, he explained to the younger man wherein lay the danger.

"If the jam breaks once," said he, "nothing top of earth can prevent it from going out into the lake, and there it'll scatter, Heaven knows where. Once scattered, it is practically a total loss."

They felt blindly through the rain in the direction of the lights on the tug and pile-driver. Shearer, the water dripping from his flaxen mustache, joined them like a shadow. At the river he announced his opinion. "We can hold her all right," he assured them. "It'll take a few more piles, but by morning the storm'll be over, and she'll begin to go down again."

The three picked their way over the creaking, swaying timber. But when they reached the pile-driver, they found trouble afoot. The crew had mutinied, and refused longer to drive piles under the face of the jam.

"If she breaks loose, she's going to bury us," said they.

"She won't break," snapped Shearer. "Get to work."

"It's dangerous," they objected, sullenly.

"By God, you get off this driver," shouted Solly. "Go over and lie down in a ten-acre lot, and see if you feel safe there."

He drove them ashore with a storm of profanity and a multitude of kicks, his steel-blue eyes blazing.

"There's nothing for it but to get the boys out again," said Tim; "I kinder hate to do it."

But when the Fighting Forty, half asleep but dauntless, took charge of the driver, a catastrophe made itself known. One of the ejected men had tripped the lifting chain of the hammer after another had knocked away the heavy preventing block, and so the hammer had fallen into the river and was lost. None other was to be had. The pile-driver was useless.

A dozen men were at once dispatched for cables, chains and wire ropes from the supply at the warehouse.

"It's part of the same trick," said Thorpe, grimly, "those fellows have their men everywhere among us. I don't know whom to trust."

"You think it's Morrison & Daly?" queried Carpenter, astonished.

"Think? I know it. They know as well as you or I that if we save these logs, we'll win out in the stock exchange; and they're not such fools as to let us save them if it can be helped."

"What are you going to do now?"

"The only thing there is to be done. We'll string heavy booms, chained together, between the cribs, and then trust to Heaven they'll hold. I think we can hold the jam. The water will begin to flow over the bank before long, so there won't be much increase of pressure over what we have now; and as there won't be any heavy shock to withstand, I think our heavy booms will do the business."

He turned to direct the boring of some long boom logs in preparation for the chains. Suddenly he whirled again to Wallace with so strange an expression in his face that the young man almost cried out. The uncertain light of the lanterns showed dimly the streaks of rain across his countenance, and his eye flared with a look almost of panic.

"I never thought of it," he said in a low voice. "Fool that I am! I don't see how I missed it. Wallace, don't you see what those devils will do next?"

"No; what do you mean?" gasped the younger man.

"There are twelve million feet of logs up river in Sadler & Smith's drive. Don't you see what they'll do?"

"No; I don't believe——"

"Just as soon as they find out that the river is booming, and that we are going to have a hard time to hold our jam, they'll let loose those twelve million on us. They'll break the jam, or dynamite it, or something. And let me tell you, that a very few logs hitting the tail of our jam will start the whole shooting match so that no power on earth can stop it."

"I don't imagine they'd think of doing that," began Wallace, by way of assurance.

"Think of it! You don't know them. They've thought of everything. You don't know that man Daly. Ask Tim; he'll tell you."

"Well, the——"

"I've got to send a man up there right away. Perhaps we can get there in time to head them off. They have to send their man over." He cast his eye rapidly over the men.

"I don't know just who to send. There isn't a good enough woodsman in the lot to make Siscoe Falls through the woods a night like this. The river trail is too long; and a cut through the wood is blind."

With infinite difficulty and caution they reached the shore. Across the gleaming logs shone dimly the lanterns at the scene of work, ghostly through the rain. Beyond, on either side, lay impenetrable drenched darkness, racked by the wind.

"I wouldn't want to tackle it," panted Thorpe. "If it wasn't for that cursed tote road between Sadler & Daly's, I wouldn't worry. It's just too easy for them."

Behind them the jam cracked and shrieked and groaned. Occasionally was heard, beneath the sharper noises, a dull boom, as one of the heavy timbers forced by the pressure from its resting place, shot into the air, and fell back on the bristling surface.

"Tim Shearer might do it," suggested Thorpe, "but I hate to spare him."

He picked his rifle from its rack and thrust the magazine full of cartridges.

"Come on, Wallace," said he, "we'll hunt him up."

They stepped again into the shriek and roar of the storm, bending their heads to its power, but indifferent to the rain. The sawdust street was saturated like a sponge. They could feel the quick water rise about the pressure at their feet. From the invisible houses they heard a steady monotone of flowing from the roofs. Far ahead, dim in the mist, sprayed the light of lanterns.

Suddenly Thorpe felt a touch on his arm. Faintly he perceived at his elbow a face from which the water streamed.

"Indian Charley!" he cried. "The very man!"

Another installment of this truthful and exciting story of life in the logging and lumber trade will be given Ledger readers in next week's Ledger. Every regular subscriber to the Ledger is offered cameras and patterns free as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Lonely White Children.

Of all the lonely white children on the face of the earth, the most lonely probably are two boys who live on the faraway, famous Christmas Island, which is so tiny that it hardly makes a dot on the map. It lies in the Pacific Ocean, more than 200 miles away from the coast of Java, and belongs to England. These two white boys are much like two Robinson Crusoes, for, while there are 550 inhabitants on Christmas Island, most of them are Chinese and almost all the rest are Malays. There are only four white men there and three women, so the two boys grow up pretty wild and must care for their own clothes and cook their own food and attend to all the other wants for which most boys look to their mothers and other women.

Almost as lone as these boys are four white boys who live on one of the twenty small coral islands, known as the Cocos or Keeling Group, that lies about 1,200 miles from Singapore. These four boys are better cared for because they have a school to go to, but on the whole they are almost as lonely as the Christmas Island boys. There are sixty-eight other boys on the islands, but they are scattered over the whole group, and it often is a day's sail from one island to the other, unless the weather is unusually good. So the boys do not see much of each other. Besides that, all except these four boys are natives or Chinese, and there is not much in common between them and the English boys.

On the Chatham Islands, about 500 miles away from New Zealand, there are thirty or forty boys and girls, all white, who get very little opportunity for ever seeing anybody from the outside world, for ships touch there only occasionally. Most of these children have to help their parents take care of the sheep, which are the wealth of the island.

There are several hundred children on the Fiji Islands. They go to school with children whose grandparents were cannibals, and they get along very well with them. The white boys and girls are almost as good at canoeing and surf swimming as are the native Fiji children and the brown Polynesians, and they have lots of fun in Fiji, although they grow tired of the monotony of their ocean girdled homes after a few years and go wild with joy when their parents decide to send them to school in England or America.

"Why, Maggie, yer used ter say yer loved me."

"Well, ain't I got a right ter get some sense as I grows older?"

A Bad Stomach

Lessens the usefulness and mars the happiness of life.

It's a weak stomach, a stomach that can not properly perform its functions.

Among its symptoms are distress after eating, nausea between meals, heartburn, belching, vomiting, flatulence and nervous headache.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

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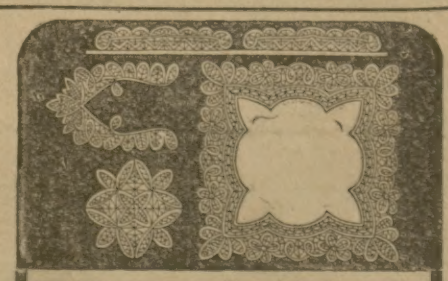

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SPOILED CHILDREN

Usually Make Sickly Men and Women.

The "spoiled" child usually makes a weak, sickly man or woman because such a youngster has its own way about diet and eats and drinks things that are unfitted for any stomach and sickness results.

"I was always a delicate spoiled child and my parents used to let me drink coffee because I would cry for it," says a Georgia young woman. "When I entered school my nervousness increased and my parents thought it was due to my going to school so they took me out again. But I did not get any better and my headaches got worse and weakened me so that I was unfit for any duty. Sometimes I would go a whole day without any other nourishment than a cup of coffee.

"Last spring I had a bad attack of the Grippe and when I recovered I found that coffee nauseated me so I could not drink it and even a few swallows would cause a terrible burning in my stomach. It was at this time that a friend who had been much benefited by the use of Postum suggested that I try this food drink. I found it simply delicious and have used it ever since and the results speak for themselves. I have gained 12 pounds and my nerves are as steady as any one's.

"I consider myself well and strong and I make it a point now to take a cup of Postum with a cracker or two as soon as I come home from school in the afternoon. Postum with crackers or a biscuit makes my luncheon. It certainly saved my life for I know coffee would have killed me in time had I continued drinking it.

"I have a young girl friend, a stenographer, who declares nothing strengthens and refreshes her like Postum and she has a little oil stove in her office and makes a cup of Postum at noontime. I have recommended this wonderful beverage to many of my friends who know what it has done for me." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Look in each package for a copy of the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Quite the Same.

"What do you think of old Uncle Peter devising all his money for the erection of a mausoleum over his remains?" said the first needy relative.

"Awful!" replied the second. "It's just a willful waste."

"Huh! I call it a wasteful will."

The Story of Phoebe Snow.

If you have ever taken a summer railroad trip you will enjoy the "Story of Phoebe Snow," which describes in a series of dainty pictures the experiences of a pretty girl who went to Buffalo. The illustrations are in seven colors, each reproducing a design of the girl in white which the Lackawanna Railroad has made so familiar in the last few months. The booklet has a particularly pleasing cover and will afford considerable amusement beside giving information which every traveler ought to know. It will be sent in response to request accompanied by two cents in stamps to T. W. Lee, General Passenger Agent, New York City.

Not Twins.

She—I hear the stork brought something to your house the other day.

He (proudly)—Yes, indeed.

She—Of course, it's just too cute.

He—No; it isn't two cute, thank goodness! Only one.

A Fine Kidney Remedy.

Mr. A. S. Hitchcock, East Hampton, Conn. (The Clothier), says if any sufferer from Kidney and Bladder Disease will write him he will direct them to the perfect home cure he used. He makes no charge whatever for the favor.

Catering to Dame Fashion.

Man Dressmaker—Well, what now?

Apprentice—I have discovered a way to make a woman's dress so that she will look like a hump-backed baboon with bat's wings.

Man Dressmaker—Glorious! It will become the rage.

Strength Rather Than Grace.

At one of our theological seminaries it is the custom for the students to take their turn in asking a blessing before meals. At one time last term the meats had not been as tender as the students thought they ought to be, and the eyes of the faculty were opened to the fact when one day a young student offered the following blessing:

"Oh, Lord, give us strength to eat this meat."

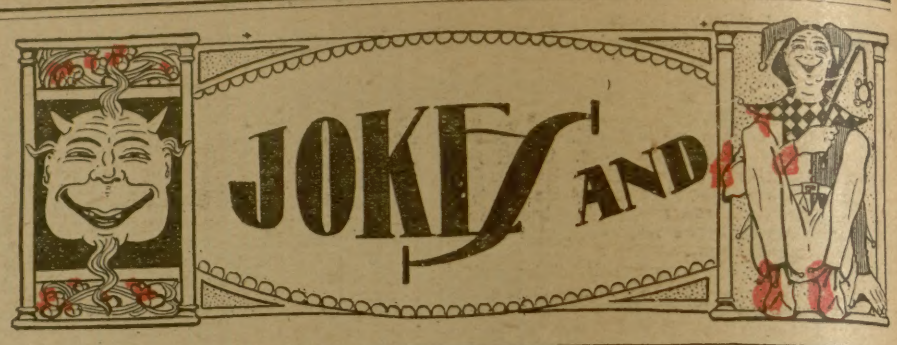
Not Engaged.

Football Man—We would like to have some music at our game this afternoon. You are a bandmaster, I believe?

Von Tooter—Yah; but mein musicians haf struck. I shust begin bracticing mit new ones, und ve gan blay only von tune.

"Well, maybe that will do. What is it?"

"'Shonny Get Your Hair Cut.'"



Pleasure vs. Work.

Some fish for pleasure; others make
Their fishing quite a task.
These last their bait in tin cans take,
The former use a flask.

Maisy—Did Jim kiss you last night?
Daisy—Of course, he didn't. Why do you ask such a question?
Masy—Well, he told me he liked your cheek.

Their Strong Points.

Briton—Your heroes of the revolution, your so-called patriot generals, were really a common, illiterate lot. Most of their correspondence was not only ungrammatical, but——

Yankee—They did play hob with the King's English, sure enough.

At the Woman's Club.

"Are they very advanced?"

"Extremely. Why, they play poker and make it a rule that four queens beat a straight flush."

Indiana Nonsense.

A camera fiend of Vincennes
Attempted to photo some hennes,
He was nearly distrait
When he looked at the plate—
He forgot to uncover his lennes.

Enough.

"A Virginia woman has thirteen sons, each of whom is six feet tall."

"I should think she'd feel superstitious about it."

"Well, I guess she doesn't feel superstitious enough to want another."

The Hostess—So sorry, Count, the service is very slow tonight; we have to wait so between courses. You don't mind waiting, do you?

Count Rochambeau—Ah, no, dear madame; I am indeed a ver' fine waiter.

The Hostess—Oh, Count, you can't mean that. A waiter is a servant, one who waits on the table.

The Count—Ah, no, I am not that kind. I am the waiter that waits on the waiter, the which waits on the table while ze guests are waiting on ze waiters who wait; ah, sacre bleu, diablo zis beast of Anglaise.

Politeness Betrayed Him.

"Yes," related the tattered wayfarer, "I told de lady in de wayside cottage dat I was a street car conductor out of a job, but she wouldn't believe me."

"Why was dat?" ased his companion of the ties.

"She said I was too polite."

An Effective Plan.

Mr. De Broker—The bills my wife sends me from the seaside are ruinous.

Mr. De Sharpe—My wife didn't remain away two weeks.

"Eh? How did you manage it?"

"Hired a fellow to typewrite my letters to her, and scented the paper with violet."

Sour Grapes.

"I believe," said the girl with the new engagement ring, "that men and women should marry their opposites."

"That being the case," rejoined the maid with a streak of envy in her make-up, "I suppose your fiance is everything that's nice."

Wisdom of Experience.

"No, sir," said the owner of the brindle canine. "I wouldn't take a farm for that dog."

"I don't blame you," replied the man whose wisdom was the offspring of experience. "It's a sight easier to run a dog than it is to run a farm."

Proof of Insanity.

"Is the prisoner going to plead insanity as his defense?" asked the court stenographer.

"Judging from his selection of an attorney," replied the lawyer, who had failed to get the case, "I should say he was."

$1.00 Big Stove Offer.

If you can use the best big 500-pound steel range made in the world or the best coal or wood heating stove ever made, and are willing to have either stove placed in your own home on three month's free trial, just cut this notice out and send to SEARS, ROEBUCK & Co., Chicago, and you will receive free by return mail big pictures of both stoves, also many other cooking and heating stoves; you will also receive the most wonderful $1.00 steel range and heating stove offer, an offer that places the best steel range or heating stove in the home of any family, such an offer that no family in the land, no matter what their circumstances may be, or how small their income, need be without the best cooking or heating stove made.

Rural Journalism.

Old Subscriber—We won't have any exchange news in this week's Crier.

New Subscriber—Think not?

Old Subscriber—No; the editor's wife is using the clipping shears to cut the editor's hair.

Sheared Samson.

Stubb—Female barbers are something of a novelty.

Penn—Nothing of the kind. They had a female barber in biblical days.

Stubb—Get out! What was her name?

Penn—Delilah.

A Played-Out Tub.

Little Boy—Please, Mrs. Grumpy, mother wants to know if you will lend her your washtub?

Mrs. Grumpy (gruffly)—No; I can't. The hoops are off, the bottom's out, and it's full of water.

Where Friendship Ceases.

"That girl with Johnson there—a friend of his, I presume?"

"Nope; used to be, though."

"So? Had a falling out?"

"Not exactly. He married her."

A Cool Question.

A. Fusser—What would you do if I should kiss you?

Mary McLane—I would scream for help.

A. Fusser—Why, don't you think I could do it alone?

Rubbing It In.

Bridget—Miss Gladys is not at home, sor.

Mr. Kallow—Really? Pshaw! That's too bad!

Bridget—Yis, sor; but she said if that's a box of candy ye're carryin' she hoped ye'd l'ave it.

It Would Seem So.

He—I see by the papers that your former husband has just been divorced from his third wife.

She—Yes; as I always said, it's impossible to live with that man.

Might Get It.

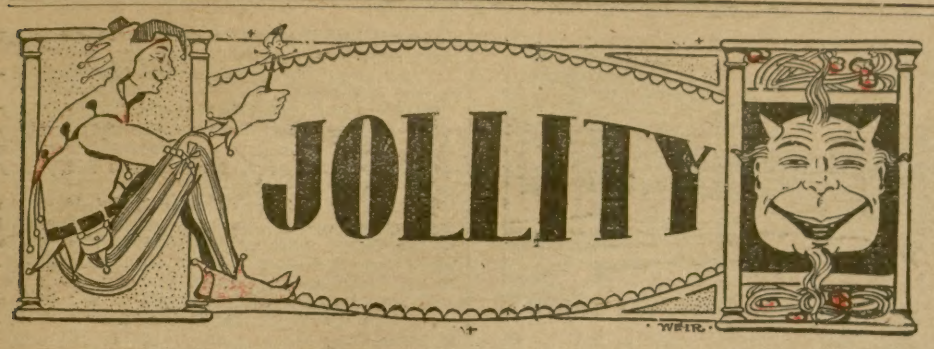
"Has the baby had the measles yet, Mr. Popps?"

"Sh-sh! Don't speak so loud. Whenever he hears anything mentioned that he hasn't got he cries for it."

Up-to-Date Girl.

Ernie—You are a great lover of romance. Why not run away with your father's coachman?

Ida—Too plebeian! I'll wait until he gets a chauffeur.



In Love at Last.

Mother—We must make some inquiries about the young man who is calling on Clara.

Father—We have inquired about forty different young men, and that's all the good it did. Sooner or later she gives them the mitten.

"She is in earnest about this one."

"Think so?"

"I know it. When they start out for a moonlight walk, she directs their steps uptown toward the park, instead of downtown toward the ice cream saloons."

Attractive Advertising.

Customer—I see you advertise bicycles from ten cents to one hundred dollars.

Dealer—Yes, sir.

"What kind of bicycles do you sell for ten cents?"

"Candy ones."

True Philosophy.

Neighbor—Ain't you goin' to hunt up that feller that eloped with your wife?

Smartweed—N-o; let the crime bring its own punishment.

War in the Future.

General (when bullet-proof uniforms become common)—What have you learned?

Aid—Victory will soon perch upon our banners. We have filled the enemy's clothes so full of lead they can't move another step without undressing.

A Close Calculator.

Wife—Why are you in such a rush to get the Great Americo-European Encyclopedia as soon as it comes out?

Husband—I want to stick it up in plain view in my office, so that the subscription agents will see it when they come to sell me one. It will save fifty dollars worth of time.

Small Profits.

Burglar Bill—Got any children?

Slippery Sam (moodily)—I had a son onct. I trained him to snatch pocketbooks from ladies out shopping.

"What became of 'im?"

"He starved ter death."

Lack of Applause.

After William Hepburn Russell had made a political speech to a rather undemonstrative audience he said to a companion:

"Stump speaking is a great deal like poker, after all."

"How's that?" his companion returned

"Oh, you know, one often feels the need of a good hand."

His Sharp Points.

Tess—So you're really engaged to Mr. Slimm?

Jess—Oh, yes; he schemed and planned so that he finally won me.

Tess—Yes; he's pretty sharp, isn't he?

Jess—Extremely so; but he puts one of the parlor soft cushions on his knees and I don't mind it.

Safety Assured.

Mistress—I will have to leave you alone in the house for a few days. Do you feel afraid?

Pretty Domestic—No, indade, mum. Oi know plinty av policemen who wud just die fur me.

Orthographic Research.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, as he concluded his charge, "if the evidence shows in your minds that pneumonia, even indirectly, was the cause of the man's death, the prisoner cannot be convicted."

An hour later a messenger came from the jury room.

"The gentlemen of the jury, my lord," he said, "desire information."

"On what point of evidence?"

"None, yer honor, but they want to know how to spell pneumonia."

Great Training.

Congressman Lobbleum—How do you suppose Spiker acquired his wonderful diplomacy?

Congressman Grabber—Domestic training.

Congressman Lobbleum—Domestic training!

Congressman Grabber—Yes; he's had twelve years' experience living with his wife and her mother.

HEARD IN A HASH FACTORY.

Waitress—Have some wheat cakes, sir? The batter's up.

Rooter—That so? Well, put a few hot ones over the plate and be lively about it.

The First Cloud.

Mother—You can't stay in this hot city. Why don't you tell your husband you must go to a summer resort?

Bride—I—I don't dare.

"Why not?"

"If he says 'no,' I will be miserable because I can't go, and if he says 'yes,' I will be miserable because he can live without me."

Seeks Diversion.

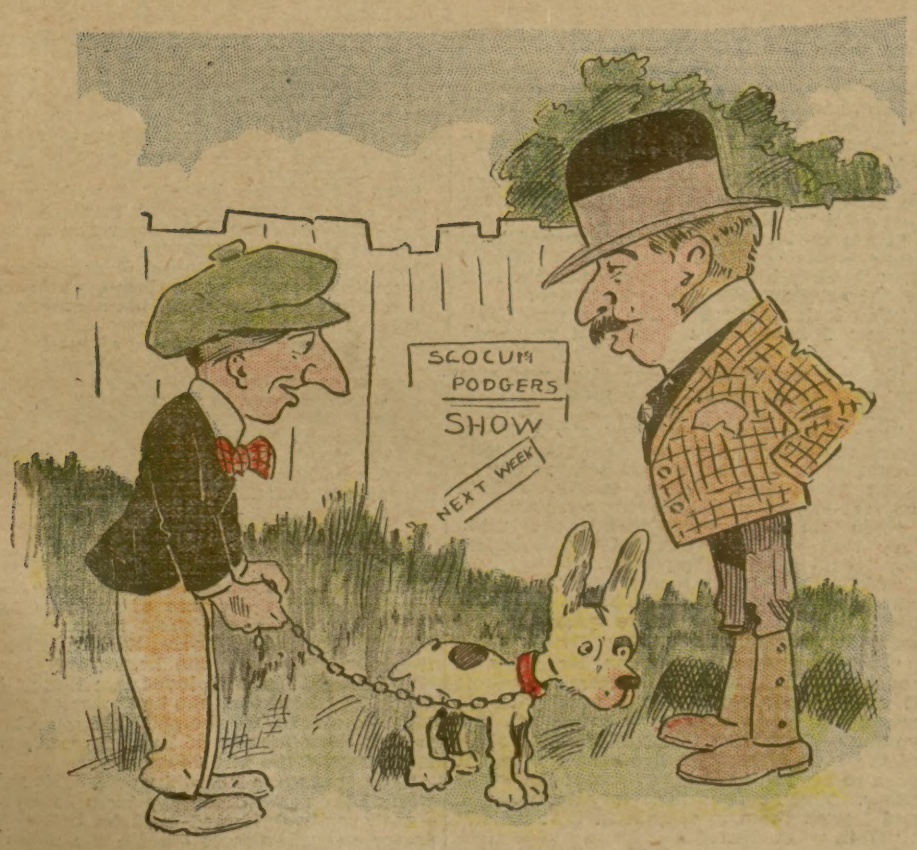
He—Why is she suing him for divorce?

She—For diversion.

He—Diversion?

She—Yes; she says being married is so monotonous.

IN DOUBT.



"What sort of an animal is that?"

"Why, it's a setter."

"Is it? What kind, Plymouth Rock or brown leghorn?"

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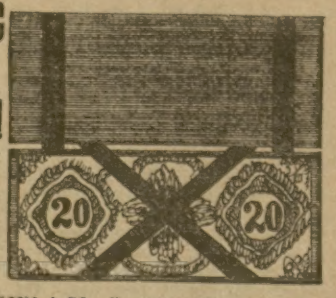

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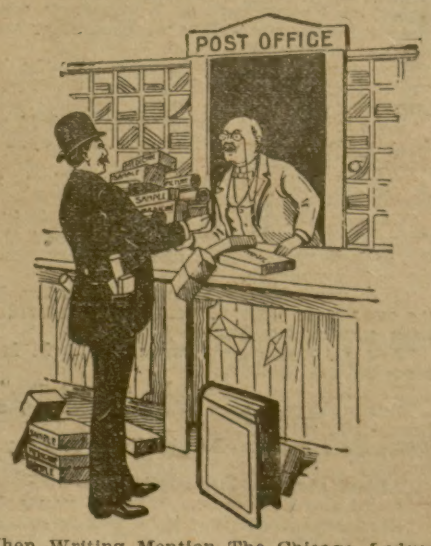

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Reform Due to Chicken.

Timmy Padgett was down on the program to tell the Concatenated Order of Bad Boys why he reformed. This is the sad, sad tale that little Tommy told and every sentence was wrung from his heart. As he told his harrowing story the tears chased down his cheeks and splashed noisily on the stone pavement.

"Boys," said Timmy, "you used to hear me called Chimmie. That was when I was naughty and before you reached out with the free end of the life line and gathered me in. I reformed, and here I am now a member of this most respectable body. Where did I get mixed up with the idea that there was nothin' doin' in the bad boy line? Ah, I don't know, fellers. Not exactly, but I connected with it one day, and the idea fastened and grew until finally I chucked the whole dog canning, window tick-tack business into the river, and fell into the straight and narrow on both feet. I hain't got no kick coming on my parents. They were all right. So were my teachers. They used to do the spare the rod and spoil the kid stunt with me a good deal, but I always had it coming, and I never felt too bad about it.

"My greatest failing was a great hankering to go out to the woods all the time and shoot chickens, under the impression they were ostriches and deer. I used to shoot chickens with a bow and arrow, and then build a fire down in the woods somewhere and cook the chicken and have a fine meal. Sometimes I would milk a well-disposed bossy cow, and on several occasions I made a raid on some farmer's kitchen and got away with as much loot as I could carry. There was nothing reform school in any of this, but it used to make the farmers sore, and they got so they would quit the straw stack and chase me two miles every time they saw me coming down the road.

"One day I was skulking around, playing that I was out in an African jungle after elephants. I spotted a fine elephant, which most people would have called a Shanghai rooster, probably, and chased it down into the deep, deep woods. There I got a good chance at the Shanghai elephant and killed the ferocious beast. I made a fire and went to work to pick my elephant, although out in Africa I don't believe the hunters as a general thing bother about picking elephants, and when all was ready I put it on to cook. While busy putting more wood on the fire I was seized by a farmer about ten feet high and with a voice like a roaring wind down in a cave. At first he was going to wear out his cane on me. I told him that I didn't seem to care for that, and then he had another notion and announced that he was going to make me eat that chicken down to the last bite. That didn't seem tough, but I found out that it was after all.

"I cooked the chicken until I thought it was done, and then I took it off and cooled it. Old whiskers with the club and the hundred degrees below Pensacola, Florida, voice kept a good hammer lock on me all the time and I saw no way of doing anything but eating the chicken, but as I had intended to do that anyway, I thought I was getting off pretty easy. I got my knife and tried to cut a drumstick off the chicken. Gee! Talk about your india rubber fowls! I haggled and sawed at that chicken for ten minutes before I got that drumstick off. Then I tried to eat. I chewed on that drumstick for an hour and made as much impression as though I was gnawing at a rubber shoe. The Rube sat over me and grinned and kept saying, 'Pitch in, sonny, and eat hearty. Don't mind me.' I did my best to eat that chicken, but I was having a dreadful time. My jaws ached and I felt as though I had already swallowed three sections of lead pipe, with a couple of more miles of pipe to eat before I quit.

"'Fine, tender chicken that,' said the farmer. 'My son, remember how hard you worked to get this meal. Don't be bashful. Cut in.' I tried to beg off and everything. I told the farmer to spit on his hands and get a good swing on that club and give me all there was coming, but he laughed and said he was having too much fun watching me eat chicken, and, besides, he knew I was a poor boy that had to steal for a living and I needed food and he proposed to see that for once in my life I got a square meal. Well, I sat and fought that tough old rooster until all the fight in me was gone. But the farmer wasn't satisfied.

"When I said I would eat no more, but would take the whipping and yell hurrah while I was getting it he merely said that if I refused to eat any more he would load me into a big coop with the chickens and drive me into town and all around so that everybody could see me. Of course, that was worse than the whipping, so I stayed there and gnawed away on that chicken like a steel drill going into boiler iron. I managed to eat most of it, and then the farmer made me gnaw the bones, and pretty near scared me to death by saying he was going to make me eat the feathers. Finally, I just laid down and told that farmer to throw me into the river or do anything he wanted to, but that I was all in.

"Then he got up and said he thought he was satisfied and walked away. It was a couple of hours before I felt like moving. Then I went sneaking home and was sick for a couple of days, and I've never been able to look a chicken in the face since. That's my sad story. After that chicken banquet I was meek and gentle and tame. I suppose I ate so much chicken that it sort of affected my nature, for after that I always felt like flying home to roost when it come dark, and so I was a bad boy no more."

The Slave Was Responsible.

Wendell Phillips was in a hotel at Charleston, had breakfast in his room and was served by a slave. Mr. Phillips spoke to him as an abolitionist, but the other seemed to be more concerned about the breakfast than about himself. Finally Mr. Phillips told him to go away, saying he could not bear to be waited upon by a slave. The other remonstrated: "'Scuse me, massa, but I'se 'bliged to stay yere, 'cause I'se 'sponsible fo' de silverware."

LINKS OF LOVE AND GOLD;

Or, The Grey-Osmond Duel.

By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Bonnie Bessie did not close her eyes the night of Ross Sherman's attack on Gerald Grey. She sat in her room awaiting the coming of the man who was to take the life of another for love of her.

With the early morn voices startled her—the newsboys calling out the news in their papers.

"Mornin' 'dition o' Herald 'nd Times! Full 'count of the killin' las' night at Langley's store!"

"Great heavens! He is dead at last! But why don't Ross Sherman come?" exclaimed Bonnie Bessie, and she continued to listen to the cries of the paper carriers, until there came a knock at her door.

"That is Ross now," said the girl, and she drew back the bolts.

But her one-armed protector stood before her, and said, as he handed her a paper:

"You sent that youth to his death last night, Bessie."

One glance at the heading, and Bonnie Bessie sunk on a chair, burying her face in her hands.

"That man has a charmed life, Bessie. I tell you I begin to feel we had better let him alone."

"Never! I will track him to his doom. Poor, poor Ross, what a sad end," she murmured, as she read an account of the affair, which, of course, gave Gerald Grey all the credit he deserved.

"I'll have his body decently buried, poor fellow," said Bonnie Bessie, and then, with the air of a woman who grieved more that Gerald Grey was not dead than for her lover that was dead, she dressed herself for a walk, determined to glean what news she could of the affair.

Going to the police court she boldly claimed the body of Ross Sherman as her lover, and had it buried in a small lot she purchased, at the same time ordering a small marble monument placed above it.

Not that she loved the man who had lost his life for her sake, but that Bonnie Bessie was not ungrateful—she had a good heart and reared under different influences, she would have made a noble and magnificent woman; but who can blame her, distorted as was her early life by bad example, and the remembrance that her father died on the gallows?

Several days after the affair had blown over, Bonnie Bessie rigged herself out in her youth's suit of clothing, and just at nightfall left home to reconnoiter. She was still determined to be revenged on Gerald Grey.

In crossing Broadway her mind was so deeply occupied that she failed to notice that two omnibuses were bearing swiftly down upon her from different directions.

Too late she observed her danger, and in dismay stood spell-bound.

The next moment she would have been trampled to death. In her ears rang warning cries, loud curses at the negligent drivers, the rattle of the wheels and the tramp of horses.

Then she gave up all for lost; but suddenly a tall form darted to her side, his iron strength hurled back the nearest horse, and his arm encircled her waist.

Then, with a bound, he was free of danger, while a yell of triumph rose up from the crowd.

"Calvert, you did that well. Ha! is not the boy hurt?"

"No, Raymond; he has fainted from fright. Here is a carriage; we will take him at once to our hotel," returned Calvert Forrester, and entering a hack, they drove rapidly away, and a few minutes after were in their room at the hotel.

Here two discoveries were made—the boy was a woman, and had already returned to consciousness.

"Was it you that saved my life, sir?" and Bonnie Bessie turned her beautiful eyes on Rodney Raymond.

"No; I had not that honor, Miss; my friend, Calvert Forrester, saved you."

"Calvert Forrester! Did you say Calvert Forrester?" and Bonnie Bessie sprang from the lounge upon which she had been placed by her preserver.

"Yes; my name is Calvert Forrester. Did we ever meet before?" said that individual, with grave surprise.

"No; I thought you were dead. It is so reported and believed."

"True; it was a mistake, as you see."

Bonnie Bessie was silent a minute, and then said, quietly:

"Do you believe Gerald Grey to be your friend?"

Calvert started, but replied:

"I did think so once. Why do you ask?"

"Because I know that if he was friendly to you, it was to gain some selfish end. He is now absent from the city on a visit to your wife."

Calvert Forrester turned deadly pale; even his lips grew white, but he said in calm tones:

"How do you know this?"

"I know it because I dog his every step; you see me here in the dress of a boy; it is the better to follow him. What I am he made me, and I will never rest until Gerald Grey is in the grave."

The woman spoke with desperate earnestness, her eyes flashed, she showed her white teeth threateningly, and her small hands were firmly clasped.

Calvert Forrester was silent, but Rodney Raymond said, in his calm way:

"You see before you, fair girl, two who are now on the trail of Gerald Grey. We will unite forces and run this man to death."

"And there is another—but I must not speak of him," said Bonnie Bessie, suddenly checking herself.

"Why?"

"His secrets are not in my keeping, and I might compromise him."

"No; on our words, no, we are in search of all who can tell us aught of Gerald Grey."

"But he would endanger his life were he to come here; he is an outlaw."

"Then he will be in no danger; we will pledge our words on that. Where is the man of whom you speak?"

"He is in the city. He lives where I do."

"And you live with an outlaw! One would not believe it, from your face."

"Faces often lie. We meet daily those who wear pleasant faces, while their hearts are in tears. Yes; I live with an outlaw; he is my only protector now, and my ally in my hatred of Gerald Grey."

"That man has injured you sadly, then?" asked Calvert.

"He dragged me down to ruin. He bound himself to me by a false marriage, and then ceased to love me when he found that you were dead, sir," and she turned her gaze upon Calvert Forrester.

"True," she continued, "I was the heiress to a dishonored name, and my protector, my uncle, was an outlaw; but I was not bad at heart until Gerald Grey brought ruin upon me."

"You are not the only woman he has betrayed; but his end is drawing near, and we ask you to aid us all in your power," said Calvert Forrester.

"Swear to me that you will never make known anything regarding the place I take you to; swear that you will never betray its occupants; and I will carry you to him I spoke of as knowing more of Gerald Grey than any one else."

Both men took the required oath, and a few moments after the three were driving rapidly out to the old Knickerbocker mansion.

With perfect confidence, Bonnie Bessie admitted her new-found companions into the dilapidated old homestead, showing them into the room of Ross Sherman.

In the apartment everything was just as the eccentric genius had left it the night he went forth to return no more.

Bidding the visitors be seated, Bonnie Bessie disappeared and in a short while returned, accompanied by her quondam friend of the one arm.

"Gentlemen, this is he of whom I spoke," said Bessie.

The man came in prepared for business, for his one hand rested confidingly upon the butt of a revolver in his belt.

"I am glad to see you, gentlemen, if you are enemies of that arch fiend, Gerald Grey." Then his eyes fell full upon the face of Calvert Forrester, while he added:

"You look very much like Mr. Grey."

"Yes; I have often been told so," said Calvert.

"If you are Calvert Forrester, you owe me one," abruptly said the man.

"How so?"

"You'll know as I tell my story, if, as Bonnie Bessie says, we are to make a clean breast of it against Gerald Grey; but I won't be dragged before courts. I hate lawyers—they are the devil's agents."

"You will not have to go into court; the jury that will try Gerald Grey is before you," said Rodney Raymond.

"Well, that is business. Now, tell me what you are after, and when I see your hand, I'll know whether to pass or not," said the man, suspiciously.

"It is our intention to run Mr. Grey to cover; but if we bring him before the courts it will cause a scandal which we wish to avoid, and some of our witnesses are like yourself—they wish to remain out of sight of the law; also, there are others whom I wish to keep in total ignorance of the whole affair. They believe Mr. Grey to be dead, and I wish them to remain in that belief."

"Well, what then?"

"My desire is to get Mr. Grey in our power, bring my accusers before him, and then sentence him if we are convinced that he is guilty."

"A good plan; nothing easier to be carried out; but it must be done soon, as he is preparing to get married in a few weeks."

"How know you this?" asked Calvert Forrester, quickly.

"His present valet is my pard. Mr. Grey returned from the country tonight; in two weeks he goes back to get married, but it is all kept very secret, for reasons Mr. Grey knows best."

"I propose this gentleman," pointing to Rodney Raymond, "goes and makes a call on Mr. Grey. The valet wil show him up to his room and also let us into the house. Then, after a short talk, we can come in, and he'll be confronted by all of us; but I have two more witnesses that I would like to have."

"Where are they?"

"In another part of town. I will take a carriage and go for them at once."

"Our carriage is outside; go in that. As you come back, bring another vehicle with you; we will await you here," said Calvert Forrester, now most anxious to act quickly where to him so much was at stake.

"I'll be back within the hour, and in the meantime Bonnie Bessie will entertain you. We've good wine here that came out of some of the best cellars in this town; help yourselves," and the one-armed plotter left the room to go after his confederates.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Gerald Grey sat once more alone in his bachelor quarters—his home that was soon to be blest with the presence of a beautiful bride.

That evening at eight o'clock he had returned from a flying visit to Maud—the last before he should go to bring her back with him.

At his request and for reasons which he told Maud he would one day explain, their engagement was kept a secret, and excepting his valet, to whom he spoke confidentially, none knew he was to be married, and Maud and her parents had refrained from mentioning the circumstance.

It was now nearly midnight, and Gerald Grey was about to retire, when his valet put in an appearance, with:

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

"Who is he?"

"Never set eyes on him before, sir; says he's an old friend."

"Show him in."

The valet "showed in" Mr. Rodney Raymond, who advanced with cordial manner, hand extended, while he said:

"My dear Grey, how glad I am to see you."

"Raymond Redfield! In Heaven's name, what do you want here?" cried Gerald Grey.

"Come to se you, old fellow, and you don't seem a bit glad to see me," said the ex-Bushranger in an injured tone.

"Frankly, I am not; I do not care to renew the acquaintance with you."

"How unkind to wish to cut a friend; but we'll not quarrel on that point, as I have business to settle with you—some friends to introduce. Come in!"

The last two words were called out in a loud voice, and the door opening, six persons entered the room.

"What means this intrusion? My valet shall kick your friends out, and I will aid him," cried Gerald Grey, springing to his feet.

"Your valet is in my pay; you'll do no such thing, Gerald Grey," said Rodney Raymond, as he leveled his revolver at the head of the man before him.

It was useless to fight against it; he had no weapon near him, and he sunk down into his easy chair, and said, sternly:

"Well, what is your wish? To extort gold, I suppose?"

"Not exactly; we have come to try you. Handcuff this man!"

Gerald Grey would have sprung once more to his feet, but the cold muzzle of the pistol pressed against his temple, and two men stepping forward slipped the handcuffs upon his wrists.

"What means this?" he said, the sweat standing like beads upon his brow.

"It means that we have come to try you for your life. Come forward, all of you."

The crowd at the door advanced, and the eyes of Gerald Grey fell on one man.

"Donald Greene! Has the sea given up its dead?" he cried, in a tone of horror.

"Wasn't dead—didn't die—see here!" and the one-armed man pushed Calvert Forrester forward.

For a moment all believed that Gerald Grey would die then and there.

His eyes almost started from their sockets and rolled vividly; the veins of his neck and forehead stood out like whip-cords; his teeth chattered, and he essayed to speak; but the effort was a failure, and he sunk back in his chair.

"Here, drink this brandy; it will sustain you," and Rodney Redmond turned out a glass of liquor from a decanter and handed it to the suffering man.

By a mighty effort Gerald Grey recovered his self-control, drank the brandy, and then sat glaring savagely upon his accusers.

"Gerald Grey, we have come here to try you for your life. In a court of justice you would doubtless have the advantage, as many of our witnesses could not appear on account of danger to themselves; but here we hold the advantage. Donald Greene, come forward and state all that you know of this man's crimes," said Rodney Raymond, who had been appointed judge of the impromptu court.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I'll tell you all that I know, sir, and must begin a long way back. I am an Englishman, born on the estate of the late Lord Osmond, and when I grew to manhood I married Constance Moore, the daughter of the lodge-keeper of the homestead.

"I believed my wife loved me; but at her death found out that she had married me to hide her shame, for the child she gave birth to was the offspring of Lord Osmond, who had dragged the girl down to ruin.

"And that same lord did worse. His noble wife at the same time gave birth to a child—one cruelly deformed—and he bribed the doctor and midwife to change the children. The deformed child, supposed to be my wife's, died, and the other child, supposed to be Lady Osmond's, lived and grew to womanhood.

"That man, then Captain Grey of the

English army, fell in love with the supposed Lady Osmond, and she returned that love, though she was betrothed to another—her cousin; and upon that marriage hung a large fortune, left them by the father of the young man, and the uncle of the girl.

"Whether that man sought a quarrel with Ferd Osmond or not, I cannot say; but he killed him in a duel, but was cleared by the court martial that tried him.

"Lord Osmond and his daughter having gone to India, Gerald Grey exchanged into the regiment of the nobleman, with the determination to marry the Lady Ione Osmond, who, by the death of her cousin, at her lover's hands, had inherited the property left by her uncle.

"Finding out how I had been treated by Lord Osmond and dishonored by my wife, whose memory I yet dearly love, I became a reckless vagabond, and seeking India had an interview with the nobleman, determined to make him support me. That interview was overheard by Captain Grey and at once used by him to force Lord Osmond to consent to the marrriage with his daughter.

"Driven to frenzy by the fact that the man who had killed Ferd Osmond, was forcing him to give permission for him to marry his daughter, Lord Osmond attacked Captain Grey and fell by his hand.

"At that moment I appeared upon the scene, and at rather an unfortunate time for me, as after a struggle Captain Grey overpowered me and marched me off to the guardhouse as the murderer of Lord Osmond.

"Before my trial I had an interview with this man, the result of which was that, for a pecuniary consideration, I should plead guilty of the murder, and he was then to aid my escape.

"He did set me free, in company with a deserter from his regiment, and we set sail for Australia. On the passage, in a heavy storm, the deserter seized me suddenly and hurled me into the sea, bribed to the act by Gerald Grey.

"But I was a good swimmer and supported myself without any hope of escape, only I did not wish to die until I could hold out no longer.

"Suddenly I saw before me a large ship lying to, and the next instant I was borne directly upon its bows, and succeeded in catching hold of the bowsprit stays, and in that way saved my life. The vessel was bound to England, and upon my arrival there I revenged myself partially upon Gerald Grey. I placed in the hands of my lawyers my story of the illegitimacy of the Lady Ione, and gave them ample proof of the truth.

"Then I went to India, determined to kill Gerald Grey, but I found that he had married Ione Osmond and left for Australia. I went there after him, but found, after a long search, that he had been killed by Bushrangers, so I emigrated to the United States, and one of the first men I saw was Gerald Grey.

"I then began to track him, and followed him into another state, where he stopped for several days at a small town. As he used to take frequent walks in the country, I lay in wait one day, and fired upon a man whom I mistook at a glance for him; but it was this gentleman, I now know," and Donald Greene pointed to Calvert Forrester and then continued:

"Believing I had killed him I gave up the search until I found out my mistake by the papers; then I set to work again and had a second shot at a person I mistook for Gerald Grey; but I killed the wrong man, and, strange to say, Captain Grey came very near being hung for the murder of the young gentleman, who was a rival of his.

"Well, I made several other attempts to kill him, but he always escaped—one time by the aid of Mr. Forrester, whom he, in return for saving his life, made his business manager.

"Once I had him in my power and Bonnie Bessie here saved him, with his own aid, for he's a very devil in a fight. Then again I believed I had him in a carriage and knifed a fellow who proved to be his valet, not this man; but I did not despair and now he's run to cover."

"You shall be hung for these murders, my fine fellow," growled Gerald Grey, savagely.

Donald Greene made no reply, and Rodney Raymond said:

"What have you to say against this man, madam?" and he turned to Bonnie Bessie.

"I have to say that he's dragged me down to ruin—entered into a mock marriage with me, and then cast me off for a fresher face and fairer form," and the woman spoke with a hatred that was intense; she could never forgive the man who had betrayed and then cast her off.

"Now, my men, we will hear your story," and Rodney Raymond motioned to the two men that Donald Greene had brought.

As they stepped forward the face of Gerald Grey flushed; but the color soon fled, leaving it deadly pale again.

"We ain't got much to say, sir, but I'll speak for both of us, and tell you how that gentleman, Mr. Grey, come to me one day, and axed me if I'd do a job for him for good pay.

"As I'm a rascal, of course I said yes; and he told me to get a partner and meet him at the Jersey depot the next day at nine o'clock.

"Well, sir, we was on hand, and he took us into the country, and there we laid a little plot to seize a gal and let him rescue her.

"Well, sir, we succeeded to perfection., I seized the gal, and as I was gittin' inter ther boat with her, he dashes up on horseback, fires a blank shot at me, and I goes under, and my pard pulls me inter the boat and rows away, leavin' that gentleman cock of the walk. It was a pretty affair, sir, and well acted, but was a put-up job; but the people all believed in it, for in that country tramps were frequent, and now and then somebody got robbed on the highway.

"Mr. Grey paid us handsome for the work and we come back to town unsuspected of our country trip, and when Mr. Grey came to our den one night, I recognized him, and told Donald Greene here of our little game."

"Thanks, my man; your comrade will swear to your statement, I suppose?"

"I will, sir, every word of it," promptly answered the other amateur actor in the kidnaping and rescuing scene.

"Now, Mr. Forrester, what have you to say?"

"That Mr. Grey, in return for a service I rendered him, gave me a position that paid me handsomely, and always seemed my best and truest friend, for he was ever most generous toward me and my wife; but, and I say it with deep regret, I now believe that since my marriage, all kindnesses toward me were traitorous, for I am now confident that Gerald Grey sent me to Australia to meet my death, that he might marry my widow, and thereby gain a large fortune, which she will inherit now in several weeks, upon her twenty-first birthday anniversary."

Calvert Forrester had spoken more in sadness than in anger, and Gerald Grey would not once meet his eyes.

Then Rodney Raymond spoke and his tones were cold and cutting.

"Gerald Grey, you have the condemning testimony of these witnesses; now I will speak and let them know that you deserted your wife and children in Australia, leaving them under the impression that you were dead—a deceit I aided you to carry out. The cause of your desertion was to gain the confidence of an old man, who passed several days at your sheep farm, and whom you found out to be immensely wealthy, and his heir to be a niece in America.

"That old man took you into his employ, made you his confidential clerk, and died suddenly, leaving you the heir to some interests in the firm of Langley & Co., of this city, and also several thousand pounds in gold.

"I believe that you poisoned that old man, and then came to America to complete your act of crime.

"We have all heard of your deep-laid plan to rescue that old man's niece, and her engagement with Calvert Forrester doubtless prevented you from winning her love, for you are a fascinating man, Gerald Grey.

"But when you found that Calvert Forrester had married Maud Melville, the heiress, you sent him away to Australia to transact some business for the firm, but you first wrote to me to have my men decoy him away from his hotel, and lead him to death; and for this I received my blood-money—a large sum.

"But the name of Calvert Forrester was known to me. I had a schoolmate by that name—one who had saved my life—and I told my men not to kill him, but to bring him to me alive, yet to, in some way, let it be believed that he was dead.

"Calvert Forrester did not surrender without a desperate struggle, was shot down, and lay for weeks in my cabin between life and death; but at last he recovered, and here he is, to face his intended murderer. Now, Gerald Grey, what have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"Are you afraid to die?"

"No."

"Then prepare for death; you have but one hour to live."

When Rodney Raymond ceased speaking, Gerald Grey dropped his head upon his ironed hands, and a groan escaped his lips.

It was not a fear of death; but all his crimes, all of his plotting had been useless—he had been caught at last in his desperate game for gold.

In his distress there came before him a vision of that poor wife, Ione Osmond, whom he had deserted; the face of Bonnie Bessie, whom he had betrayed, and the sadly beautiful eyes of Maud, whom he would have dishonored by a marriage bond when he was already the husband of another, the innocent woman who believed so wholly in him as the friend of her lost husband, and to whom he was illegally betrothed.

Now, he was to lose all, and he did not care how soon death came. Suddenly looking up, he said, quietly:

"How am I to die?"

"By poison, if you will take it with your own hand—by the knife of Donald Greene if you refuse."

"I will take the poison; give it to me."

"First, let us have a little writing done; you are worth considerable, I believe?"

"Yes; I am half owner in the firm of Langley & Co., and I have some personal effects of value."

"Good! Have you made a will?"

"No."

"Then write as I dictate. There, your hands are free."

A wild gleam came into the eyes of Gerald Grey, and for a moment he seemed inclined to try his strength with all of his accusers; but he changed his mind, and said, quietly:

"I am ready."

"Then begin now: 'As I have no desire to live, life being a burden to me, I do this night, Sept. 18, 18—, end my own life by taking poison. And now, being in my right mind and senses, I will to my wife, Ione, and her children, Osmond and Lulu, all of my property, consisting of my share in the firm of Langley & Co., and my presonal effects. And I desire that my share of the firm and my personal effects shall be sold at once for cash to the highest bidder, and the amount turned over to Mr. Calvert Forrester, the manager of the firm of Langly & Co., and whom, until his return this day from Australia, I believed to be dead, it having been reported that he had been murdered by Bushrangers. With the earnest desire that my above wishes shall be carried out, I sign here my name.

"'Gerald Gray.'"

With his usual firmness the doomed man wrote, Rodney Raymond dictating, and signed his name without a tremor.

"Now, Mr. Grey, here is your poison; it is swift and sure death," and Rodney Raymond poured out in a glass a colorless liquid, and handed it to the doomed man.

Gerald Grey took it calmly, glanced at it, and repressed a shudder, then his eyes fell upon the face of each one in the room.

"Curse you all; I bequeath you my curse," he sneered; and then turning to his desk, he took out a bundle of letters and threw them into the grate fire. Calvert Forrester caught a glimpse of them; they were addressed to Gerald Grey and were in Maud's handwriting.

At sight of them the pity in his heart faded away, and he became as cold and stern as Donald Greene and Bonnie Bessie.

With a grim smile Gerald Grey raised the glass to his lips, lowered it, and glanced around the room at the objects so familiar to him, and then without the tremor of a muscle, the quiver of a nerve, drank down the deadly draught.

"It is done; I die as I lived—without fear," he said, in his deep tones, while a murmur of admiration came from the lips of all; did they expect to see him cower before death, they were mistaken.

Lying back in his easy chair, Gerald Grey crossed his hands, closed his eyes and with a grim smile hovering upon his lips, awaited the coming of the Angel of Death.

A few strong quivers, a clenching of the hands, a gritting of the teeth, to keep back a cry of agony, and the deadly drug had done its work. Gerald Grey had met his doom.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

For some moments after Gerald Grey had breathed his last, none in that room moved; then Rodney Raymond stepped forward and laid his hand upon the lifeless pulse.

"His crimes are ended; come, let us go."

A few moments of consultation followed, and Donald Greene and his two confederates left the room and the house, liberally rewarded with gold, and urged by Rodney Raymond to give up forever their evil pursuits.

Then Bonnie Bessie, while Calvert Forrester and Rodney Raymond were talking apart with the valet, crept to the side of the dead man.

Her face was stony, her eyes dimmed with tears; now that he was gone forever from her, she realized how dearly she loved him.

Stooping quickly she pressed her lips to the cold forehead, and then, with a heart-broken cry of anguish, fled from the house, fled out into the dark streets and back to her home in the old mansion. From that night she was an utterly lost woman; the future held no hope for her, the past only misery, and she drank her cup of bitterness to the bitter dregs as the beautiful and reckless belle of a den of infamy—the retreat of fallen women who have trusted too far in men's honor.

"You will remain here until morning—the usual time for you to enter your master's room—then rush to the police station with news of his death; here is money for you," and Rodney Raymond gave a roll of bills to the valet.

"Now, we must go, Calvert; with the early train I must start West with Mrs. Grey and her children, and in a secluded part of the country find a home. Ere we start I would like you to witness our marriage."

Calvert Forrester shuddered at the thought. Was Rodney Raymond going to marry a woman whose husband he had just seen die?

But perhaps it was best; Mrs. Grey and her children would have a protector, and he felt, outlaw though he had been, Rodney Raymond would make a good husband and father.

Leaving the house together, they sought their hotel, and at eight o'clock in a private parlor, Mrs. Grey, once the beautiful Ione, became the wife of Rodney Raymond, little knowing what that man had been in the past.

An hour after the ceremony, Calvert Forrester bade his friends adieu at the depot.

"Farewell, old fellow; I will write you as soon as we are settled; remember that the money left by Gerald Grey to his wife and children, came from the sale of some property he had forgotten about in England. She must never know but that he died in the Australian bush. Don't kill your wife by a sudden surprise, and one of these days run out to see us; good-by," said Raymond, and the train rolled off, leaving Calvert Forrester to battle with coming events alone.

At the proper hour the morning after the death of Gerald Grey, his worthy valet appeared at the police station with the news of his master's death.

Officers at once returned with him, and there sat Gerald Grey, looking most life-like, yet lifeless.

The written document on his table proved how he had died—a suicide, so said the papers on the following day—yet for what reason he had taken his life, none could tell; that must forever remain a mystery.

Calvert Forrester, mentioned in the document left by the deceased, was at once hunted up; but he could give no clew to the mystery; had just returned from Australia, and calling at Mr. Grey's rooms had had an hour's talk with him; from Mr. Grey's rooms he had returned to the hotel; of course, he would see to the burial, and carry out the wishes of Mr. Grey as soon as he had consulted with Mr. Langley, the remaining partner of the firm of Langley & Co.

That consultation was held, Gerald Grey was buried with honor in Greenwood, Mr. Langley paid cash for his deceased partner's interest in the firm, and the money was put to the credit of Ione, once the wife of Gerald Grey.

Then Calvert Forrester left for Riverside Cottage, whither a long letter had already preceded him, telling Maud that he was still alive.

The meeting between those two, so cruelly parted, so strangely met, I have no right to dwell upon, for it is sacred.

But I will say that till this day Calvert Forester has never told his beautiful wife that Gerald Grey was the basest of villains; and she mourns his death as a true man, a devoted friend, and not as he in reality was, one who through the best years of his life had been living a lie.

(The end.)

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Or, Boy Sailors of the China Sea.

By St. George Rathborne.

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CHAPTER XXI.

FIRE SIGNALS IN THE AIR.

There was no hurried jumping ashore, for one and all were impressed with the exceeding gravity of their business, and even the versatile and fun-loving Bob had sobered down to a becoming point.

Julian, being in the bow, was the first to step ashore, and no sooner had he done so than seizing upon the boat he drew her prow along the sand.

Even the grating sound thus produced caused Julian more or less anxiety, for his nerves were wrought up to such an edge that he seemed to believe a murderous Malay half-breed might be concealed behind each and every rock or tree, ready to pounce upon the venturesome pilgrims who had dared invade the soil of their island home.

Merriwether had chosen his landing with considerable wisdom, for a fringe of bushes protected them on either side, while it seemed a good place from which to reach the waiting junk in a hurry.

They had landed with but one object in view, and everything else must give way to that particular purpose.

Speech was tabooed, save it be carried on in whispers, for such was the condition of affairs that the sound of English striking on native ears would be as a match to gunpowder.

The mate had his plans arranged down to a fine point, and unless some unexpected hitch occurred they were supposed to work like machinery.

Like the cautious man that he had ever shown himself to be, he took a good look around him before plunging into the labyrinth of bushes that lay between their landing place and the outskirts of the village squatting on the side of the rise. A sailor falls into such a habit of glancing aloft the very instant he comes on deck, to see what the weather promises, and how the ship is carrying her canvas, that no matter where he may find himself the rule maintains its grip upon him.

Sometimes it is a nuisance, and then again the habit brings its own reward, as in the present instance; for otherwise they might have remained in complete ignorance of certain important facts that had a startling bearing on their business ashore.

Julian heard his tall comrade utter a low exclamation, and noted that his frame stiffened out as though something had thrust itself upon his attention. He supposed on the instant that Mate Merriwether had discovered a prying native near by, whose inquisitive eyes had noted the landing of this strange expedition; and it puzzled the lad how they were to prevent the spy from raising his voice and giving the alarm.

Then, as he began to pay more attention to the attitude of his friend, he saw the sailor was looking upward, first toward the region where the other islands undoubtedly lay, sheltered in the pitch-black gloom, and then twisting his neck to throw a glance up at the peak over-topping the particular one on which the pirates had their stronghold.

It dawned upon Julian that something singular connected with the light on the summit, used as he understood by the natives as a signal, must have captured the mate's attention.

"What is it?" he whispered, eagerly, for no matter what it might turn out to be it surely interested him, with so much at stake.

"That blasted fat Chink is bound to be the death of me yet," muttered the mate, as if to himself, and Julian marveled greatly, for he could not believe it within the range of possibilities that old Falstaff, after his recent adventure with the shark, would venture upon the tremendous task of swimming from the haunted island to some point where he could come into touch with any of his fellows.

As to making the journey as they had just done on the junk, it was utterly incredible.

What then?

Some intuition caused Julian to raise his eyes while this question was boring its way through his busy brain, and suddenly he saw light, for something up yonder against the sky caught his attention, even as it had attracted that of the keen-eyed Merriwether—something that appeared very like a star, only it moved this way and that, in eccentric curves, making all manner of queer lines athwart the horizon.

Once he saw these zigzag flashes, what seemed to be the truth flashed upon Julians' mind like an inspiration, and he felt horrified at the calamity that appeared to threaten their undertaking.

Yes, he could mentally join with Mate Merriwether in denouncing the false policy of mercy when taken in connection with such cutthroats as the three men left in quarantine on the island of the dragon, for, beyond a question instead of lying low and waiting for the dawn to relieve them of their fears, those worthies, deterred from plunging into the sea, had actually climbed to the summit of the hill which their territory sported, and being possessed of certain secrets whereby a blaze might be created, they had made a fire, and then with a blazing torch attempted to open communications with the vidette whose duty kept him beside the signal fire on the lookout of Hawks' Nest.

The situation was acute, and enough to make any one groan because of their impotence to alter the conditions; since those who did the signalling were far beyond reach, and nothing could prevent them from telling the whole story, provided communications were once opened.

Ah, that was where their only hope lay, in the lax system prevailing with the lookout; for so seldom did anything reward his vigil, sometimes months passing without a sign from the broad sea that stretched away to north, east and south, that the man on duty was apt to grow careless, and even sleep at his post; so long as the fire did not die out he could not be blamed.

What if he were enjoying a nice quiet nap just now, the fellows over yonder on the dragon island might continue to wave their torch in all manner of suggestive and eccentric curves until their arms dropped to their sides, but it would not transfer the news they sought to impart.

Julian prayed under his breath that the chap on high would continue to enjoy his privilege for an unlimited space of time; he even wished that his slumbers might ever be free from bad dreams, since it was greatly to their advantage that he be not disturbed just now.

"There's some hope they won't be able to make connections," grunted the disgusted mate, who was mentally belaboring himself because he had allowed his better nature to prevail when disposing of the prisoners, knowing as he did what many a man would do with such treacherous rascals, with so much at stake; "and even if they do it'll take some time for those critters to tell all they know, so we've got a fighting chance at the worst. One thing sure, we mustn't waste any more time here. Forward's the word, boys."

The young fellows were only too anxious to proceed, having the impetuous nature of their kind, so that the mate could not have pleased them more than when he declared his intention of pushing straight on to the village.

The last glimpse Julian had of the signalmakers the torch was keeping up its mystic movements through the air, doubtless fraught with suggestive possibilities to any one able to decipher the code by which these operations were carried on.

Merriwether knew considerable in this line, and had he been at leisure he no doubt would have enjoyed nothing better than the task of picking up sentence after sentence as transcribed by that blazing meteor of the sky; but it happened that just now his time was too precious to be thus spent, especially since he already knew all that the signalmen sought to convey.

Their course kept them close by the water for a brief time, though bushes shut out any view that might have been enjoyed under other conditions.

It was very evident that Merriwether was treading a familiar route, every inch of which he knew by heart, so that he would have been able to traverse it with his eyes bandaged; indeed, it was the same as that now, since but little could be seen.

That they were speedily approaching the settlement, our boys knew from various reasons, chief among which were the sounds that came distinctly to their ears, such as the barking of curs. This annoyed Julian more and more, for he became possessed of the idea that if their plans were brought to naught it would be through some such miserable agency as these dogs scenting strangers abroad, and carrying on in such a manner as to arouse the whole village.

How he wished a famine had struck the place recently, so that every single cur must have been tossed into the pot to ward off starvation.

He remembered how geese had once saved ancient Rome, and it was just possible that a mangy cur might on this occasion be their undoing.

He believed he should ever afterward hate the sight of a dog as something not in sympathy with his nature; and yet up to now he had always loved the canine race, having possessed many a pet of that character.

However, he plucked up a little courage when he noted that Merriwether did not appear to be dreadfully worried over the dog question, and it dawned on Julian's mind that doubtless the mate had become quite well acquainted with the canine population during his long stay, so that he not only knew how to domineer over the brutes, but they had good cause to fear his kick and also the sound of his voice, whether raised in English or the language of the allies.

Perhaps while in his company the two strangers might be free from unwelcome attentions on the part of these prowlers.

So his mind turned again to the signal from the island of the dragon, and he wondered whether it was going to work them an ill turn; really, it was strange how some people repaid acts of consideration. Now, those fellows richly deserved summary punishment after the treacherous acts of Falstaff, and yet when allowed to go almost scot free they repaid the debt by trying to trip up the visitors who were bent upon looking in on the allied village while the inhabitants slept.

It was discouraging and showed how such merciful tactics were wasted when applied to such unappreciative antagonists.

Closer still they drew, until it was now possible to catch a glimpse through the scrub of the dwindling fires which they had noticed from the bay; while dim, uncertain mushroom-like structures scattered here and there marked the congregation of huts and shacks of which the village was fashioned.

Merriwether did not pounce directly down upon the place, for that was not in the line of his plans, nor would it have brought them to where the prison of the captain was to be found, save by passing directly through the most densely populated section of the town.

They could hear boats rubbing together down at the landing, and Julian, as he cast one searching glance over the open space that now loomed up to their left, was sure he could detect a number of larger craft at anchor just off the shore; but evidently no port regulations insisted upon each and every anchored craft showing a riding-light, for they were wrapped in impenetrable darkness, though doubtless tenanted by those who sailed them over the sea in search of plunder.

Now they ascended the hill for a bit; but there was always a trail, and it was not difficult to follow in the footsteps of their guide.

It had been arranged that in case anything turned up to raise an alarm, the most desperate tactics possible must be employed, and they had come from the junk fully supplied with material to create the wildest excitement amid the collection of inflammable structures.

Briefly Julian and Bob were chartered as members of the fire department, only instead of the salvage corps their present mission was in an entirely opposite direction, for they were sworn to destroy, to set fire to each and every shack possible, and create a reign of terror in the community, thus suddenly aroused from sound sleep to find their village storm-swept, with new dwellings flashing forth into billows of flame every minute.

All this to cover the movements of the mate, who would push directly for the prison of his comrade, and carry out his part of the program there.

He had explained how the pearl-diver, finding a man-eating shark hovering above him in the clear water, waiting for him to rise, immediately stirs up the sand with the double-pointed stick he always carries on his excursions to the oyster banks; and taking advantage of the thickened condition of the water he is enabled to gain his boat in safety; and because Merriwether had at some stage in his life played the part of pearl-diver he was in sympathy with such clever tactics looking to the confusion of a cruel foe.

In his native town perhaps Julian had delighted to "run with the machine," whenever there was a blaze; but never had he dreamed that he would live to play the part of wholesale incendiary, and feel a wild desire to cremate the better part of an entire village; yet such a vocation it seems may even be thrust upon the mildest-mannered man who ever went to sea, such are the vagaries of an eccentric fate.

They had now arrived at the parting of the ways, for it was deemed essential that they separate, as Mate Merriwether evidently did not believe in the principle of keeping all his eggs in one basket; moreover, each of them had a particular duty to perform, and much depended on how it was done.

Julian remained where he was, and prepared for business, though deep down in his heart he hoped and prayed it might not be necessary to resort to the radical measures they had laid out; while Bob on his part was to accompany the big sailor a little further along the trail, when, he, too, must drop out, and attend to his part of the program.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PEAL OF THE CRACKED BELL.

When he found himself alone upon the border of that mysterious village of the Chino-Malay pirates, and which he had never set eyes upon save in this goblin darkness, Julian naturally experienced a feeling of, well, hardly what one would call fear, though a shiver chased up and down his spinal column; but at any rate the situation was enough to give a veteran campaigner something in the line of a chill.

He braced himself immediately, and set his teeth firmly together, resolved to carry out his part of the business with a fidelity that would deserve the best of success.

The articles he had in his hands were of a character to bring suspicion on him if caught loitering near any factory or mill in a civilized community, where a strike happened to be in progress, for it would not require much penetration to read their un-

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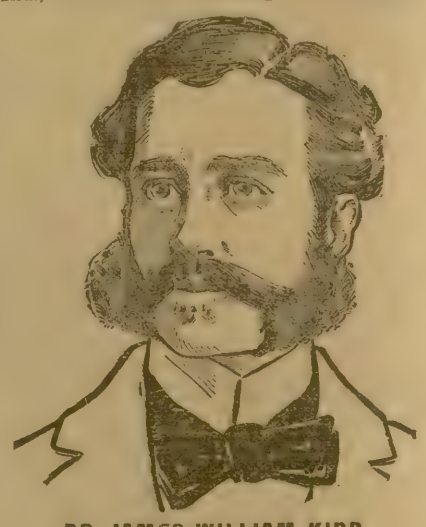

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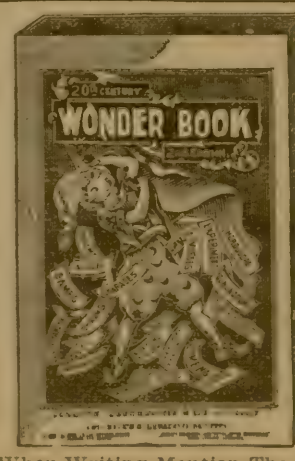

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doubted character as a persuader of conflagrations.

They consisted for the most part of small bundles of rags that had been saturated with some inflammable oil, so that it only required the scratching of a match to supply a blazing meteor which nothing could possibly influence until its force had been burned out.

Matches they had found in plenty aboard the junk, and it was evident that the pirates were quite accustomed to many such pleasant accessories of civilized life, thanks to the generous hauls which they from time to time made on tramp ships that fell into their clutches.

Julian listened with eager ears, for he dreaded lest some wandering dog sniff out his presence, and signal to all his canine friends the fact that a stranger was within the gates, toward whom it were necessary they should show attention.

He did not know what he should do under such distressing conditions, having counted on having the mate to scatter the brutes; however, there was little wisdom in crossing a bridge before he came to it, especially as there seemed to be quite a sufficiency of other matters to occupy his attention.

From where he crouched he had a clear view of the harbor, together with the distant islands that lay a dense black mass against the lighter sea background, and having the matter of those miserable signals still upon his mind it was only natural that he should give over studying the lay of the shacks in the settlement, for a brief period, and turn his attention that way.

Well, the parties up yonder were still keeping at it, and the eccentric circles and side movements appeared more vigorous than ever—Julian noticed that it was not part had they gone immediately to the crest of the hill, and pounced upon the guardian of the signal light, thus putting it out of his power to do mischief; but now it was too late, and they must accept what came philosophically.

No doubt it was an astonishing story which that whirling torch flashed over the sea, and must have made the fellow in the eyrie above rub his eyes and wonder whether he might not be dreaming after an opium smoke; and in this state of uncertainty lay the hope of delay, for he knew the penalty of crying "wolf" when there was no wolf, and would be slow to commit himself, with not a thing to show for his excuse.

More minutes; how agonizing it was to count the pulse-beats that marked the rapid thumping of his heart, while his ears were strained in the expectation of hearing some horrid din suddenly break out, that must start him on his dreadful mission of destruction.

He knew that Bob was enduring the same sensations, further up the hill, and that somewhere amid the wonderful collection of hovels, Mate Merriwether had settled down to his task of freeing the captive, if so be they had suffered the Captain to live after the escape of his companion.

Now Julian bent his eyes fully upon the dim structures near by, figuring how he could best create dire destruction in the briefest possible space of time; for he was so constituted that no matter how repulsive it might seem, if he made up his mind to carry out a duty he would throw his whole heart and soul into it, in order to bring about success.

Thus he marked one dwelling that seemed to offer exceptional opportunities to an enterprising apprentice in the line of fire-

Their course kept them close by the water.

the same thing repeated over and over, as before, just as a telegraph operator calls a fellow on the line by his particular signal; but there was a regularity in the swing of the torch, just as though some message was being flashed across space; and he actually believed the denizens of the dragon island had succeeded in attracting the notice of the man who guarded the lookout on the apex of Hawks' Nest.

That meant discovery; it stood for the awakening of the village, for a swarming out from hut and shack of the hundreds of wild buccaneers who made this miserable den their abiding place, each and every one of them armed, and eager to shed blood.

It meant that before the object of their sacred mission could be accomplished the trio of adventurers would have to resort to their most desperate tactics, and fire the village.

As this conviction swept over him, Julian was surprised to find how his muscles became rigid, as though the very nature of the crisis forced him to rise above the ordinary fears that would beset a lad, and show the spirit of a young hero; he no longer dreaded the inevitable conflict, but seemed to actually yearn for it, knowing that the sooner it came about the quicker the end would reach him; and that end, how it thrilled him to think of the glorious possibilities involved, and the blessed opportunity of throwing his longing arms around the neck of the one so dearly loved, so sadly mourned.

Minutes had passed since they left him there, but they seemed hours, such was the suspense under which he labored.

How long would it take for the mate to accomplish his work; he had said something about the Captain being put in irons during each night, and had even made preparations for getting rid of such undesirable jewelry with all possible speed; and yet it might occupy much time in the carrying out, while those rogues over the way were flashing their secrets across the bay, word by word, placing it in the power of the lookout to give the alarm.

Perhaps it would have been wise on their making, and then transferred his regards to another, and a third; for while the darkness had not lessened appreciably, his eyes became accustomed to it, and he could really see much better than a short time before.

How he longed to hear the signal from the mate telling them that he had succeeded in releasing his companion in exile, and that they were even then on the way down the hill, bound for the general meeting place; this signal was to be that same weird cry of the night-bird which had annoyed Bob while they lay off the dragon land, for, of course, there would be nothing singular about this to attract the attention and arouse the suspicions of any sleeper who might at that moment chance to awaken.

Still it did not come, though he felt sure Merriwether must have had ample time to have found his friend and removed the clumsy irons in the way for which he had prepared in advance.

Could anything have gone wrong? Was the prisoner now kept in another stockade, so that the mate could not find him? Worse still, had he succumbed to his cruel taskmasters' indignities after being deprived of the friendly consolation of daily intercourse with his fellow in misfortune?

Julian could in a measure understand how a spirit that has long been buoyed up by a species of exaltation, might suddenly give way, and with it would go the life it had so long sustained.

He shuddered and tried to hope on, praying deep down in his heart, though not a sound escaped his compressed lips.

It was a cruel experience, and one that did more to make him a man than everything else that he had ever gone through with, for after all it is the capacity for suffering that ages.

He no longer pitied the owners of those shacks. A fierceness had come over his spirit, and he could with grim pleasure wipe the whole accursed vipers' nest out of existence. What reason had it for survival, anyway, being a hotbed of infamy, fit subject for the torch?

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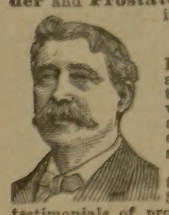

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He held in his hand the first package of combustibles, and the match with which to start the flame was ready for its work.

Had the big mate also noticed the change in the signals across the way, and understanding what it meant even better than himself, started to rush things so they might get away before the mischief occurred?

Something was fluttering from a pole near by, and Julian had long since made it out to be a triangular flag; the mate had told them these fellows claimed some sort of relationship with those fierce fighters of the mountain districts in Southern China, who have given the French their fill of fighting whenever hostilities broke out, and known under the general name of the Black Flags, who have been head and shoulders in every insurrection with which the Yellow Empire has been afflicted for a century and more back.

Thus he knew that while he could not distinguish the color of this floating flag, it was the dreaded banner of these Tonquin fighters, who wear no queue, have a bunch of coarse black hair at the back of their head, are tall and broad-shouldered, and sport a head covering of rice straw thatch. Of course, various clans were represented in the mongrel collection on this island, but they chose to sail under a banner that inspired fear and respect.

The prowling dogs had evidently begun to smell a rat by this time, for they were raging about the place in squads, with noses to the ground, trying to locate the scent that was borne to their keen nostrils, and which warned the beasts of hovering danger.

Once they came at him Julian knew the game would be up, for, unlike the mate, he had no volley of volapuk to hurl at their heads, so that he must be reduced to the dire necessity of sallying forth on mischief bent, and find how readily straw and bamboo burned under favorable conditions.

During the course of his description of the settlement, and the various devices which the cunning natives had arranged with a view of being warned as to approaching danger, such as the appearance of a British war vessel off the coast, Merriwether had mentioned the fact that while there were other means of communicating pleasant intelligence, the alarm was always sounded upon an old ship's bell,' taken from some unlucky prize that had fallen into the hands of the pirates at some time in the remote past; though this bell was cracked in a hopeless manner, still it could ring out a wild alarm under the application of vigorous jerks, and once in a long period it had warned the vilagers in time for them to get all traces of their desperate calling out of sight long before the arrival of the gunboat, so that while the officers might have suspicions, there was no tangible evidence upon which to convict the allies, and visit them with condign punishment.

Now, this same bell, while posted in the center of the village was connected in some manner with the lofty lookout above. Perhaps a long rope served as the binding link. Be that as it may, whenever the fellow on guard made good and sure that the occasion warranted such measures, he had it in his power to inaugurate a reign of excitement, if not terror, by pulling this same rope. The mate had said something about hunting it up first of all and divorcing the bell from the lookout by means of his knife, which Julian had conceded to be the masterstroke of a genius.

This being the case, he was astonished as well as momentarily stupefied, when suddenly without the least warning in the world he heard a startling "bing-bang," such as might accompany the descent of a cudgel upon a tin pan.

The cat was out of the bag, and the fellow above had learned enough to understand that it was essential the whole village turn out to hunt for the bold trespassers.

Having started in he evidently believed it his duty to keep the ball rolling, for he certainly jerked that poor old bell in a barbarous way, rattling it this side and that with a whang and a bang that brought out all its long forgotten music.

At any time there is an electricity in the clangor of an alarm bell heard at night, whether it betoken a fire or the coming of a flood from a broken dam up the valley; and how doubly thrilling must the sounds have fallen upon the ears of these two lads, crouching on the outskirts of a lawless community, and waiting for their cue to actually enter among the dwellings and apply the torch.

Alas, that signal had come with the very first mad peal of that cracked old steamer bell, for nothng could now prevent the allies from flocking forth, and instituting a search.

The only hope lay in paralyzing them in the start, in making them believe some great disaster was about to overwhelm the place, and while the confusion grew to the dimensions of a veritable panic, perhaps our friends might find an opportunity to quietly withdraw, and reaching their junk, put to sea.

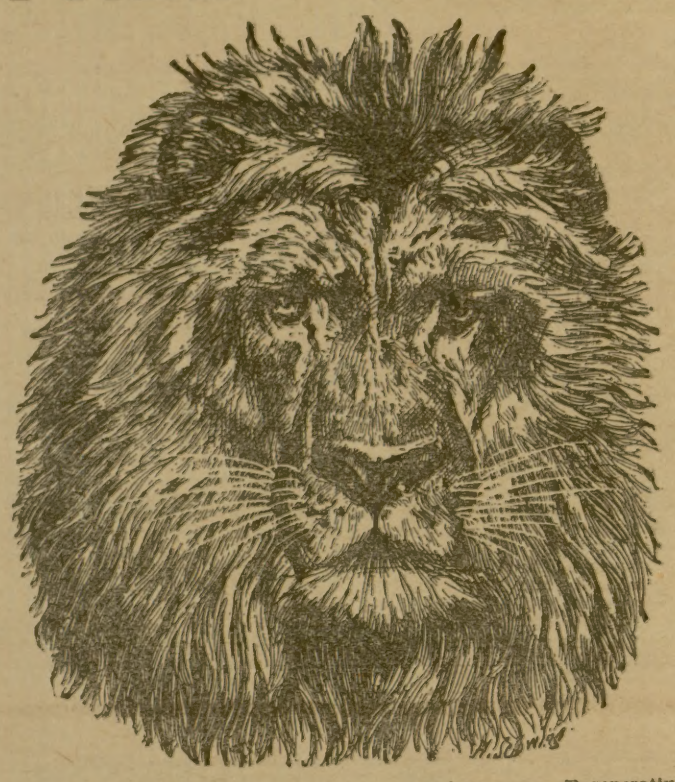
Julian was no longer crouched behind the bush; he had leaped to his feet, and started directly into the village. What if dogs got in his way, so much the worst for them, unless he had forgotten how to kick; and as for the natives whom he might meet swarming from their shacks, in the gloom they would hardly be able to tell him from one of their breed, at least until the fire began to mount upward from various sources, and by that time the demoralization must have set in, rendering them incapable of understanding what the true nature of the riotous demonstration might be.

So he came to the shack which he had long ago marked as his first torch and striking a match applied the flame to the oily rag, and then to the straw roof of the frail bamboo structure.

This thrilling story of youthful adventures in the far East will be concluded next week. Our patterns and cameras are free to all subscribers. Please note our announcement on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Life insurance to the amount of $2,500,000 is carried by John Wanamaker of Philadelphia. Mrs. Leland Stanford of California carries more insurance than any other woman. Her policies amount to over a million dollars.

FREE TO WEAK MEN



A DISCOVERY OF A REMEDY HAS BEEN MADE THAT RESTORES LOST MANHOOD AND GIVES MAN THE VITALITY OF A LION.

ONE WEEK'S TRIAL PACKAGE SENT FREE TO ALL MEN WHO WRITE FOR IT.

Regenerative Tablets is the only recognized positive and permanent cure for Lost Manhood in all its forms and stages.

It is scientifically prepared by the best chemists in the world. The reputation of the institution is such, that all physicians know when they stand sponsor for a remedy, that remedy must be exactly as represented. And when upon their reputation they make the statement that Regenerative Tablets will cure all cases of Lost Manhood, Spermatorrhoea, Varicocele, or weakness of any nature of the nerve or sexual organs, a cure must be positive and permanent. This Company will send every person who is suffering from nervous diseases a week's treatment absolutely free. There is but one test of genuine medicine and that is the results which are obtained by its use; if it cures the disease for which it is prepared it is a true remedy. This is the test by which the Fallopia Lynn Co. wish their one week free treatment to be tried. After using Regenerative Tablets one week, the sufferer will find new vigor in his organs; new force in his muscles; new blood in his veins; new ambition; a new man in vitality, health and appearance. Regenerative Tablets has a peculiarly grateful effect and the patient feels the benefit after its first day's use. It goes direct to the seat of the trouble, no matter of how long standing, giving strength and development where it is needed. This marvelous remedy banishes all feelings of bashfulness toward the opposite sex; cures all the ills and troubles that come from early abuse, excess of overwork and business cares, all of which result in premature loss of strength and memory; emissions, impotency and varicocele. Regenerative Tablets will effect a cure at any age, there is no case that it will not cure permanently except where epilepsy or insanity has already been reached. Fallopia Lynn Co. makes no restrictions, every person who writes will be sent a week's treatment absolutely free and postpaid, carefully wrapped in a plain package with no advertising on it to indicate what it contains. They have received thousands of letters from people all over the country telling of the most astonishing cures made by Regenerative Tablets. Their one week free offer is genuine, and no embarrassing questions asked. Write to-day to the Fallopia Lynn Co., 523 Burlington Building, St. Louis, Mo., and receive the week's treatment free; their book which is also free and sent with the free treatment will explain how to take the treatment in private and cure yourself at home.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

Mislaid for a Time.

Mrs. Passe was in a hurry. She was going to a concert and the friends who were to accompany her were waiting downstairs. She was dressing and making things most uncomfortable for her maid, unaware of the fact that everything she said was audible downstairs.

"Annette!" she cried, "how slow you are! Have you the flowers for my hair?"

"Ah, yes, madam, but——"

"Well, well, well!" sharply. "Where are they?"

"They are here, madam, but, pardon, I've mislaid the hair!"

Cures Weak Men Free.

Insures Love and a Happy Home for All.

How any man may quickly cure himself after years of suffering from sexual weakness, lost vitality, night losses, varicocele, etc., and enlarge small weak organs to full size and vigor. Simply send your name and address to Dr. Knapp Medical Co., 2261 Hull Building, Detroit, Mich., and they will gladly send free receipt with full directions so that any man may easily cure himself at home. This is certainly a most generous offer, and the following extracts taken from their daily mail show what men think of their generosity:

"Dear Sirs—Please accept my sincere thanks for yours of recent date. I have given your treatment a thorough test and the benefit has been extraordinary. It has completely braced me up. I am just as vigorous as when a boy and you cannot realize how happy I am."

"Dear Sirs—Your method worked beautifully. Results were exactly what I9 needed. Strength and vigor have completely returned and enlargement is entirely satisfactory."

"Dears Sirs—Yours was received and I had no trouble in making use of the receipt as directed, and can truthfully say it is a boon to weak men. I am greatly improved in size, strength and vigor."

All correspondence is strictly confidential, mailed in plain, sealed envelope. The receipt is free for the asking and they want every man to have it.

How Hot Hell Is.

The following story is going the rounds of the Missouri press: A negro preacher was asked by one of his flock how hot it was in hell. "Well, folks," he replied, "jes take all de wood in New York state an' all de coal in Pennsylvania an' all the oil in de worl' an' set hit afire. Den take er man out'n hell an' put 'im in dat burnin' mess an' he'll freeze to deaf befo' he kin hahdly light. Dat's how hot hell am."

TRUE PHILANTHROPY.

Mrs. B. W. Fretter, Detroit, Mich., will send free to any woman suffering from female weakness a sample of the simple home remedy that cured her.

Far Ahead of the Senators.

Sustacia—What an intellectual-looking group of men! Are they United States Senators?

Edmania—Senators! That's our ping-pong club.

MAGIC DIP NEEDLE FOR LOCATING GOLD and Silver Ore, Lost or Hidden Treasure. Book and testimonials free. P. & M. AGENCY, PALMYRA, PA.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

RODS The latest improved; sold under guarantee. Used for locating mines, lost treasures, etc. Cir. two cents. Address: L. A. LOWRY, P.O. Box 1501-09, DENVER, Colo.

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DICE & CARDS Expert work. Greatest dice and card catalogue ever published. Free. Address G. SMITH & CO., 128 Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

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WEAK MEN CURED WITHOUT STOMACH DRUGGING; FREE

Simple Home-Method in Possession of Detroit Specialist Does Wonders For Men—Something Entirely New.

SENT FREE TO ALL

There has been discovered by a well-known Detroit specialist a simple, direct and quick home method for the cure of such conditions as sexual weakness or lost manhood, night losses, varicocele, shrunken organs, bladder trouble, diseases of the kidneys and urinary organs, prematurity, etc., and so effective is it in results on men, even as old as 85, that it should at once recommend itself to every thinking man who suffers in this way. The cure, strange to say, is accomplished without the use of drugs, salves, ointments or anything of that kind. And yet it is no mechanical device, but one of the truly great discoveries in materia medica that cures without taking anything into the stomach and arouses a glow of warmth, energy and good feeling almost instantly in the oldest person.

The discovery can be relied upon to cure the worst and most long standing cases, and it is especially urged that men who have been unable to find a cure before, as well as those who have not known a happy moment in years, write at once to Doctor H. C. Raynor, 865 Smith Building, Detroit, Michigan, and you will immediately receive the treatment entirely FREE, as well as a scholarly essay on the subject describing all the symptoms in detail, sent plain and securely sealed. Consider that nothing is impossible in this century of marvelous achievements, the century that gave us anti-toxin and X-rays, and that however doubtful you may be because of past failures to find a permanent cure, yet this may prove the very thing you have so long sought. Let your response be prompt. DR. H. C. RAYNOR, 865 Smith Building, Detroit, Mich.

When Writing Mention The Chicago Ledger.

The Sin of the Father.

(Continued from page five.)

if from any one, you will have trouble. Mark my words for that."

"But, Hester, what can he have against me?"

"He has nothing, and that is just where the trouble lies. If he was an enemy to you he would be powerless to injure you."

"You speak in riddles," Armina said, "and I can't understand you. If Martin Blackmore is not an enemy I fail to see the motive he could have in an attempt to injure me."

"He might have no motive in it, and it might be very far from his intentions to do you an injury, and yet he might be the worst enemy you have in the world. Sometimes, my child, people suffer most from those who think the most of them."

"Hester," Armina said, "what do you mean? What are you trying to say? I confess you are too mythical for my powers of perception. What is Martin Blackmore to me, either as a friend or an enemy?"

"Oh, Armina, are you blind!" Hester cried. "Are you blind, blind?"

"I hope not. Why?"

"You surely must be, or you would know that Martin Blackmore loves you."

Armina gave a great start, then for almost a minute sat staring at her companion in blank amazement.

"Hester!" she gasped at last, "what is it you say?"

"Nothing but the truth, Armina," the old woman replied. "Martin Blackmore loves you. I have seen it in his looks and actions. He loves you madly, and for your sake I tremble at the thought of what may come of it."

Presently Armina laughed.

"Why, Hester," she said, "how can you know what Martin Blackmore thinks of me? He has been here only a few times and he and I are scarcely acquainted."

"It doesn't matter. I know what I know. Martin Blackmore loves you and he means to win you. He is a desperate man and he will go to any lengths to accomplish a purpose."

"He will never accomplish this one."

"But he will try. He is determined to win you, by fair means if he can, and by foul means if he must."

Further chapters of this extraordinary story will appear in the Ledger of next week. To every subscriber we are still sending our free cameras and free patterns as stated on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Items of Interest.

A Swiss scientist declares that microbes do not exist in mountain air at an altitude of over two thousand feet.

When rats and mice are imprisoned in a revolving cage they prefer to exercise themselves for twelve hours during the night, and rest during the day.

King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, is nearly always well-heeled. The heels on his shoes are about two inches high. He is only five feet three inches in height.

Some of the trolley roads in Indiana are to have sleeping cars. The first line to be thus equipped was between Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio, a distance of two hundred miles.

Fireflies are used as jewels by the women of Mexico. They tie them in little gauze bags and put them in their hair or on their clothing. They also keep them in little wire cages and feed them on scraps of sugar cane.

A Belgian physician declares that early baldness is frequently caused by the excessive eating of meat. He asserts that he has often checked cases of falling hair by combining with local treatment a diet of milk, eggs and fruit.

A certain justice of the peace in Maryland evidently imagines that cows can read big print. He recently gave a verdict against a railroad company for killing a cow near a road crossing for the reason that "the defendant had no sign up at the crossing."

Clothing heated by electricity will be worn by the Duke of Abruzzi during his next polar excursion. The heat will pass through a network of asbesto-covered wire arranged in the lining of his apparel. His bedding will be warmed in the same way.

Some jolly picnickers near Montaubon, France, after enjoying their dinner beside a haystack, rambled off, leaving an empty ginger beer bottle standing near it. The sun's rays became focused through the glass and set the stack alight. It was burned to the ground.

The average man will die for want of air in five minutes; for want of water in a week; for want of sleep in ten days.

A Commercial Criticism.

"You say you admire poetry?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox; "there's only one trouble about poetry, and that is that so much is written which doesn't advertise anything."

Beautiful Patterns Free---An Unparalleled Offer.

The patterns shown below are furnished us by one of the best, if not the best, pattern manufacturers in New York. They comprise the very latest styles, and are unequalled for accuracy in fit, simplicity in use, and are most economical of material. They sell from the stores from twenty-five to fifty cents each. Full instructions are printed on every pattern. Three months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 25 cents and any TWO of these patterns FREE. Six months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 50 cents and FIVE of these patterns FREE. This offer is without equal. If you are wise you will take advantage of it at once.

REMEMBER, to avoid mistakes, you must first give the number of the Pattern wanted—second, do not fail to give bust measure for waist, or waist measure if skirt is desired. Unless you do as here stated we will not know what to send you. Also, do not fail to enclose money. PATTERN DEPT., CHICAGO LEDGER, CHICAGO, ILL.

4491 WOMANS BERTHA 32-36-40 BUST.
4486 MORNING JACKET 32-40 BUST.
4497 THREE QUARTER COAT 32-40 BUST.
4489 BOX PLAITED WALKING SKIRT 22-30 WAIST.
4479 GIRL'S COSTUME 8-14 YRS.
4498 WOMANS WAIST 32-40 BUST
4484 BLOUSE WAIST 32-40 BUST.
4485 MISSES SEVEN GORED TUCKED SKIRT 12-16 YRS.
4492 GIRLS COSTUME 8-14 YRS.
4480 BLOUSE WAIST 32-40 BUST.
4493 FIVE GORED SKIRT 22-32 WAIST.
4499 GIRLS COSTUME 8-12 YRS.

LUCKY "7" PUZZLE

$1000 TO OUR LUCKY READERS FREE!

In the square below are a lot of figure 7s. They are all jumbled up and mixed together so that they are hard to count. The idea of the puzzle is to count the number of figures in the square. Every reader of this paper has a chance to win a prize. We know that very few persons will count the exact number, but we not only give prizes to the person who counts correctly but also to 1244 other persons who come nearest to the correct number. With this number of chances every person who answers this offer has a chance to get a prize. The person who counts the exact number of figures in the square gets $200, the person who comes the nearest gets $100, the next $50, the next $20, the next $10, and the next 1240 persons in the contest get presents, the average value of these presents is 50 cents each.

In case two or more persons are tied for one prize then the prize is equally divided. There is no guess work in this puzzle. It is simply a test of your ability to count figures correctly. Every figure is shown plainly but the figures are mixed up so that it takes a lot of patience and care in order to count them correctly. This contest closes Thursday evening, December 31st, at 5 p. m., and no answers sent after that time will be counted.

The publishers of WOMAN'S WORLD have a paid capital of $1,000,000. We own our own paper mill, printing plant, and twelve-story office building. We always do exactly as we agree, and in dealing with us you are dealing with one of the largest and oldest publishing houses in Chicago.

The Lucky "7" puzzle is to advertise the WOMAN'S WORLD which already has a circulation of over 800,000 copies each month. The subscription price is only 25 cents a year. The magazine is printed on book paper, profusely illustrated in colors. It has a lot of information and departments, dramatic news, household hints, puzzles, fashions, young folks' departments and splendid stories by prominent writers. We want to reach the million mark as soon as possible, and the low subscription price of 25 cents a year is an inducement that makes it possible for everyone to subscribe and get the best monthly in the world for the price.

HOW MANY FIGURES IN THIS SQUARE ?

Every one entering this contest must send in 25 cents for a year's subscription, which entitles you to register one count in the contest. Or if you send 50 cents you will get four year's subscription to the WOMAN'S WORLD and be entitled to four counts. If you are already a subscriber you may enter the contest just the same, and your new subscription will be added to your present subscription. You can also get your friends to subscribe and increase your number of chances to win prizes.

By next nearest we mean the next nearest above or below the correct number. In case one person should send in a count of one more than actually correct and another sent in a count of one less than actually correct they would tie for the prize of next nearest, and so on with the next nearest. A tie for the prize means the prize will be divided equally among those who are tied for the prize.

The counts must be filled in on the blanks below. Write your count plainly, also your name and address. Send in your count as soon as you have made it. You may send in as many as you pay for according to the offer.

CONDITIONS.—Each person must count the number of 7s in this square and fill in the count in the proper space. For example, you will fill in "1st count. 726," and if you send in four counts fill in the other spaces in the blank. No person employed by the WOMAN'S WORLD, or any resident of the city of Chicago is allowed to compete for the prizes. No one knows the number of 7s in the square. The count will not be made until after the first of January, 1904, when the figures will be counted by a committee and the correct answer will be given. Then all the counts sent in by subscribers will be compared and the prizes awarded. The paper and receipt will be sent as soon as possible. Remember that it takes some time to properly enter subscriptions, and to take care of the large mail we receive daily, so if you do not hear from us at once do not be alarmed. No counts will be changed after they are received by us. Remit by Post-office or Express order, or registered letter. Counts must be in our office before 5 p. m., December 31st, 1903. If you send 25 cents write your count in the first space. If you send 50 cents write a count in each of the four spaces. Twenty-five cents entitles you to one year's subscription and one count; 50 cents entitles you to four years' subscription and four counts. If you are already a subscriber your subscription will be extended. The subscription blank is made so that you can answer either for one or four counts. Cross out the word "four" if you send one count, or cross out the word "one" if you send four counts. Extra blanks will be furnished free upon request. Remember we are a responsible concern and that the prizes will be faithfully awarded; also remember there is no guess work about the matter. It is simply a test of patience and correctness.

HERE ARE THE PRIZES:

Each person answering this contest must fill in the blank below and state the number of figures in the square.

1 Prize for correct answer	$200
1 Prize for nearest correct answer	100
1 Prize next nearest	50
1 Prize next nearest	20
1 Prize next nearest	10
1240 Prizes of presents average value each 50 cts.	620
1245 Prizes amounting to	$1000

In case two or more persons send the same count and are entitled to a prize then the amount of the prize is divided equally.

Fill Out This Subscription and Count Blank.

WOMAN'S WORLD, Boyce Building, Chicago:

Enclosed find 25 cents / 50 cents for one / four year's subscription to WOMAN'S WORLD, which entitles me to one count / four counts in your Lucky "7" Puzzle contest. I register my one count / four counts in the blank below.

Yours truly,

Name.....

Street, P. O., or Rural Route.....

Town.....

State.....

1st Count.	2nd Count.	3rd Count.	4th Count.

NOTE.—Simply write in your count in figures.

Address WOMAN'S WORLD, Boyce Bldg., Chicago.

BOYS WANTED TO SELL THE BLADE AND LEDGER.

We want a boy in every town to act as agent. We start you without asking a cent in advance. Fill out the blank below and we will send you a bundle of BLADES AND LEDGERS by mail, also report blanks, instructions, and certificate of agency. You report each week, paying only for papers you sell. You keep 2 cents out of every 5 cent sale and send us 3 cents. In this way you can earn a nice sum each week. No experience necessary. We send full instructions so you can begin at once. Tear out the coupon below and send it in.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Boyce Building, Chicago.

GENTLEMEN: I would like to be your agent. agree to pay you for all papers I sell, less my commission. I also agree to report every week. Please send me a bundle of papers, report blanks, etc

Yours truly,

Name.....

Street..... Town.....

Date..... State.....

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"Nos. 7 & 9" a Guaranteed Cure.

Entire treatment (both external and internal) delivered free in the U.S. to any sufferer from Rheumatism or Neuralgia for $2.00 cash. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Absolutely painless and harmless. CURE guaranteed 95 per cent of cases including the worst. Long standing cases yield speedily—these are specially invited to test this marvelous home treatment of an infallible Specialist. Speedy relief is guaranteed all. **No Risk.** You to decide whether benefited. No tiresome Rubbing. Tell your friends that suffer. Every Shaffer's Treatment sold insures it at least three new friends. Once tried, never without. Remit to

SHAFFER REMEDY CO., 288 MICH. AV., DETROIT, MICH.

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FILL your own teeth with Dentaline. Stops pain and decay. Instructions free. Union Dental Co., Chicago

When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger.

SEND 2-cent stamp for **GREATEST SONG** out. D69 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill

When Writing Mention the Chicago Ledger.

WE CAN **START YOU** in a good paying business (out-door advertising). We want men in every locality. **A TOZ**, 80. Whitley, Ind.

When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger.

YOUR FORTUNE FREE Send me your birthdate with 4c. for postage and I will send your life reading free. Matters of Love, Health and Speculation made clear. All questions answered. Address PROF. B. W. AEOLIS, 1815 N. 16th St., Philad'a, Pa.

When Writing Mention Chicago Ledger.

OPIUM and **Liquor Habit** cured in 10 to 20 days. **No pay till cured.** Write DR. J. L. STEPHENS CO., Dept. B 2 Lebanon, Ohio.

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WANTED Men to learn barber trade. Women to learn hairdressing, manicuring, facial massage or chiropody. Few weeks completes. Positions furnished; $20.00 monthly paid graduates. Busy season. Write nearest Branch. Moler System of Colleges. Chicago, Ill., St. Louis, Mo., New Orleans, La., or Omaha, Neb.

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HENS **SETTING SIX DAYS ONLY** and make $530 yearly with 12. 45 medals, etc., awarded. Particulars on receiving postage. THE POULTRY BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION, 2931 Indiana Ave., Chicago, Ill.

"REPRESENTATIVES DESIRED."

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300 pages, cloth bound, illustrating all **fur animals.** All about trapping, **Trappers' Secrets,** all kinds of traps, decoys, &c. Special Price **$1,** to fur shippers postpaid. We buy **Raw Furs, Hides.** Price List free. **ANDERSCH BROS., Dept. 446, Minneapolis, Minn.**

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New Jokes and stories; side-splitting, rib-tickling, button-bursting jokes and witticisms; funny pictures enough to make a horse laugh and break up school for weeks. Regular price of this book is 25c., but we give 'em away for 10 cents, stamps or silver. Address **E. M. ROSE & CO.,** 561 Wabash Avenue, CHICAGO, ILLS

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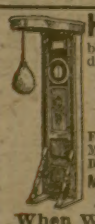

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The **WONDER** of the Age. No sewing or darning. Repairs clothing, silk, satin, cotton goods, ribbons, fabrics of all kinds, kid gloves, mackintoshes, umbrellas, parasols, stockings, etc. Package, postpaid, 10 cents; 3 packages, 25 cents. Address Penn Publishing Co., Parnassus, Pa.

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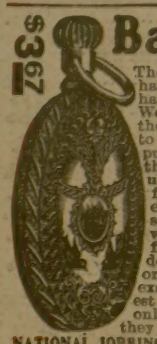
$3.67 Bargain Day



The department stores in the cities have bargain days once a week. We have Bargains every day in the year. We are the largest watch dealers in the U. S. and have a capital of $100,000 to back *our guarantee.* A large cash purchase enables us to offer a bargain that has never been equaled. **A Genuine American Watch,** new model, fully jeweled, solid nickel plates, expansion balance, train bearing, safety pinion, adjusted to time, stem wind, in a Solid Rolled Gold stiffened plate, handsome engraved double Hunting or O. F. Case. Gents or Ladies size. Will ship C.O.D., you examine before you pay, if the greatest bargain on earth pay Ex. Agent only **$3.67** and charges. Order at once they cannot last at this price. Cat. free.

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500 SHAVES for 25c.

Without a razor, soap or water by using our famous depilatory stone which removes with ease the strongest beard by simply rubbing it over the face. The wonder of the age. **Convenient, Safe, Practical.** No preparation needed. Always ready for use. Can be carried in the vest pocket. **Will last for years.** Soap spoils the skin, sharp razors make ingrowing hairs, keeping the face blotched and sore. The Depilatory Stone prevents these evils. Try one and be convinced. Thousands of them sold every year. Sent postpaid, with full directions for 25 cents. *Agents wanted.* L. H. George & Co., Room 1, 80 Dearborn St., Chicago

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

THE CORNSILK CIGARETTE.

BY GEORGE R. HORTON.

When th' bloom is on th' punkin, an' th' frost is on th' corn,
When th' stubble fields 'r' gleamin' in th' glow of dewy morn,
An' th' phlox is droppin' gently in among th' minyunette,
Then's th' time th' kids is reckless with th' cornsilk cigarette.

Then the butterballs is flyin' an' th' goose is honkin' high;
An' th' golden ears is droopin', an' th' husks is gettin' dry;
To th' cornfield he's a-sneakin', for th' silk is there, you bet,
An' it's then it gits jes' dry enough to roll a cigarette.

There's rattan cut from whipstocks, but it's pretty strong, an' bites;
An' grapevine, when you're skatin' with th' big bonfires a' nights;
But fer comfertable smokin', the bes' thing I've found yet—
Coolin', sweet, refreshin', fragrant—is the cornsilk cigarette.

The Cat Was a Fighter.

A cat owned by the engineer of a freight train on a western road seemed to enjoy sitting on the pilot while the train was in motion, says a Chicago paper. A lively adventure befell this fearless pussy during one of his master's trips. As they were slowly rounding a curve one morning the engineer noticed an eagle sitting on a tall, dead spruce. Just as the locomotive came abreast of the tree the eagle suddenly swooped downward and fiercely attacked the cat.

For several seconds there was a battle royal. The eagle made half a dozen attempts to carry away the cat bodily, but each time the cat would make a savage onslaught upon the bird with teeth and claws, and the air was full of feathers. As the train pushed ahead, the two men in the cab were filled with apprehension for the cat. The whistle was blown, but neither combatant paid the least attention to the sound.

Finally the engineer armed himself with a bar of iron and started out on the running board to aid his pet; but before he reached the scene of action the cat had torn a great hole in the eagle's throat, and the bird was in its death struggles. It was carried into the locomotive tender, where it died in a few moments. The cat bore the scars of battle, but recovered.

Returned at Once.

Merchant—Did you deliver my message to Mr. Smith?

Boy—No, sir; he was out, and the office was locked up.

Merchant—Well, why didn't you wait for him, as I told you?

Boy—There was a notice on the door, saying, "Return at once," so I came back as quick as I could.

A Misstep.

Clara, aged 4, suddenly burst out crying at the dinner table.

"Why, Clara, what is the matter?" asked her mother.

"Oh," sobbed the little miss, "my t-teeth stepped on my tongue!"

A Small Potato.

A man in Tolland, Conn., found a very small potato in one of his pockets when he came in from his work.

"Here," said he, laughingly, to a boy of 12 years old, who lived with him, "plant that and you shall have all you can raise from it till you are of age."

The bright boy cut the potato into as many pieces as there were "eyes" in it, and planted it. In the autumn he dug and laid by the increase of it and planted in the following spring. Next year he planted the larger crop gathered the previous autumn. The potatoes grew healthy and did well, and his fourth year's harvest amounted to four hundred bushels. The farmer asked to be released from his bargain, for he saw the boy's planting would cover all his land.

And yet it is quite common to despise "the day of small things."—Normal Instructor.

Work a Watch Does.

Everybody carries a watch nowadays—men, women, girls and boys. Prices range from $1 to as many thousands as one cares to expend in jeweled settings. The $1 watch often keeps just as good time as the $5,000 one. Did you ever consider the amount of labor performed by a good watch in its lifetime of fifty years? The balance vibrates 18,000 times an hour, 432,000 times a day, or 157,680,000 times a year. The hairspring makes an equal number of vibrations and there is the same number of ticks from the escapement. Multiply 157,680,000 by fifty and you have 7,884,000,000 pulsations. Yet the watch is in good condition at the end of half a century of labor.

"They say Mr. Leghorn is born of a very wealthy family!"
"I should say so. Why, his mother was an incubator that cost nearly $500."

The Adventurers.

Ralph and Harry and Dick, these three,
Resolved to travel by land and sea,
And Indians fight, and tigers slay,
And come back home for Christmas day!

Ralph made ready his jackknife bright;
Harry his bow and Chinese kite;
Dick had only a sword of wood,
But he sharpened it up as best he could.

They planned their pockets they first would cram
With bread and butter and lots of jam,
And meet in the barn at two, about—
And how do you think it all turned out?

Ralph was caught at the gooseberry jar;
Harry was sent on an errand far;
And Dick (the terrible warlike chap!)
Fell fast asleep in his mother's lap!

A Terrier's Queer Family.

A yellow terrier of St. Joseph, Mo., is raising a much mixed family. The terrier had three pups, but two of them died. She at once adopted a pig and a lamb in their places. At meal time pup, pig and lamb snuggle up to her breast in complete harmony, and she seems to make not the slightest distinction between her natural and her adopted children.

Cause of Sleeplessness.

"Willie," said that young man's mother, "you were very restless in church."

"Yes," was the penitent response.

"You never see papa behaving in that way. Why couldn't you be quiet like him?"

"Well, mamma," he answered frankly, "you see, I wasn't a bit sleepy."

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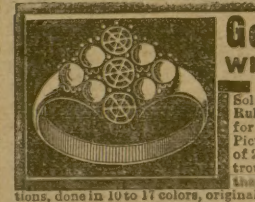

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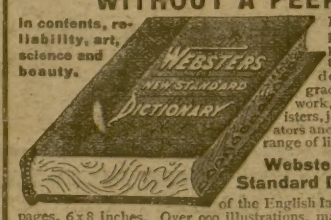

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